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Eating and Repeating: Mimesis in Food Rhetorics

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Eating and Repeating: Mimesis in Food Rhetorics

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For Anastasia Drabicky and Gryphon Burdette. Without them, this would have been impossible.

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Eating and Repeating: Mimesis in Food Rhetorics

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There is emerging, in the discipline of rhetoric and composition, a rhetoric of food. In this dissertation, I map the various approaches to food rhetorics, and I look at three different foods: burritos, kale, and kombucha. Using these foods as commonplaces, I explore the social and rhetorical discourse around them. I use "a cultural biography of things" methodology to describe the history of the burrito and use that history to contextualize Chipotle Mexican Grill's new media strategies. Throughout the cultural biography of the burrito and the analysis of Chipotle's marketing, I highlight a theatrical mimesis that blurs the lines between imitation and reality. I suggest that kale can be associated the books of Michael Pollan, whose work, I argue, constitutes a genre that establishes a set of conventions for how we think and communicate about food. I begin by looking at how Chipotle builds its corporate ethos by citing Michael Pollan's books on its website. Then I approach Pollan's body of work as a genre, showing how it establishes certain conventions in food discourse. We see transmissions of these conventions throughout food networks. I look at how fermented foods, like kombucha, travel through alternative food networks, like groups of "fermentos" led by Sandor Katz, until they have proliferated to the point of becoming mainstream. I show how Michael Pollan engages with the world of countercultural food movements like fermentos and argue that Pollan's engagement with fermentos signals a

move into posthuman rhetorics. Building on the idea of micropolitics, I posit a compostmodern micro(be)politics that re-articulates the human not as an agentive individual governed by autonomy, but as an ecology itself, situated within other ecologies. I conclude by reading "nobody cares what you ate for lunch" memes as a response to and provocation to an abundance of online food talk. We can read these memes as evidence of the significance of online food discourse. Instead of taking the memes at face value, we can ask, "who does care about food in online networks?"

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Introduction: Toward a Rhetoric of Food

In 2013, in the *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies,* Arthur Lizie puts forth a call to those in rhetoric interested in food: "For rhetoric, the big area of research is to establish a rhetoric of food" (27). I will elaborate on Lizie's call later, but for now let us begin with the assumption that there was, at the time, an emerging rhetoric of food. Or, perhaps more precisely, there were rhetorics of food. People are using rhetorical principles to talk about food, using food in the writing classroom, and applying rhetorical analysis to food discourse. Lizie's call, then, suggests that even though these activities involving rhetoric and food were happening, they had not coalesced into a rhetoric of food. I not sure they have even now. I will not be so presumptuous as to attempt that big work here, but I will gesture toward "a rhetoric of food" as a subdisciplinary home for the work I am beginning here. There may never be a *definitive* rhetoric of food. Rhetorics of food are interdisciplinary, negotiated locally, and arrived at collaboratively. Formal scholarship combining rhetoric and food is still somewhat scarce and distributed across disciplines, but a provisional rhetoric of food (with readings) can certainly be compiled from books, edited collections, readers, textbooks, and other resources. Scholarly articles on rhetoric and food appear in journals in food-oriented fields as well as in special issues of journals in rhetoric and composition and English. I will map some of the ways academic disciplines combine rhetoric and food, and then I will outline my project and situate it within those disciplines. First, I'll briefly look at the most familiar examples of food rhetorics: pedagogical examples in writing classrooms. I will offer some examples of the ways other disciplines have looked at food, writing, and

persuasion. As I move into a discussion of rhetoric and composition's approach to food, I'll explain how food builds on ecological views of rhetoric. I'll argue that these ecological views invite technology into the discussion. Finally, I'll outline the chapters in my project and what is at stake here.

We might, as many do in the Western tradition, begin with Plato. In "Dietetics in Ancient Greek Philosophy: Plato's Concepts of Healthy Diet," P.K. Skiadas and J.G. Lascaratos write that the extensive references to food, drink, and nutrition in Plato suggest that food and rhetoric were integrated on multiple levels. They write that "the philosopher does not omit to use even the human diet as an example and background for intellectual quest but also takes this opportunity to criticise harshly the materialistic concept of life and to condemn the attachment of the individual to earthly possessions" (533). Food was not just an example for Plato, it was an opportunity to teach his theory of mind and body. "For there ought to be no other secondary task to hinder the work of supplying the body with its proper exercise and nourishment" writes Plato in *Laws* (qtd. in Skiadas and Lascaratos 533). Plato includes passages on olive oil, cereals, legumes, fruits, meat, dairy, fish, honey, desserts, salt, and wine (a lot) (533-5). But it is not only specific foods that Plato ponders; Plato explored thoughts on excess and diet in general. Skiadas and Lascaratos write, "As opposed to the limitless desire for food and drink, self-restraint is considered by the philosopher to be the power of compliance with logic" (535). Plato's work on food is significant insofar as it intertwines with his philosophy and weaves its way into our contemporary discourse on rhetoric. If we look at Plato's views on food we can see a contempt for mundane, material, earthly pursuits and the promotion of a *logos*-based self-mastery that persists to this day in

some forms of rhetorical education. This is summed up by Socrates' oft-quoted comparison between rhetoric and cookery in *Gorgias*:

> In my opinion then, Gorgias, the whole of which rhetoric is a part is not an art at all, but the habit of a bold and ready wit, which knows how to manage mankind: this habit I sum up under the word 'flattery'; and it appears to me to have many other parts, one of which is cookery, which may seem to be an art, but, as I maintain, is only an experience or routine and not an art [...] another part is rhetoric.

In addition to being a way to access Plato's philosophy, food can be also be a way to resist it. Heldke demonstrates this resistance in "Do You Really Know How to Cook?" She offers four perspectives contrary to Plato's claim that the aim of cooking is merely to wrap sustenance in flavors that cater to worldly desires. In her most persuasive argument, she uses the activity of cooking to unravel the body/soul binary. "What happens if we think of cooking not only in terms of food and its benefits for those who eat it, but also in terms of the benefits of cooking for the cook?" she asks. By focusing not on the product of cooking, but on the process, Heldke challenges Plato's assumption that there must be a distinct hierarchy between pursuits of the body and pursuits of the mind. "Consider the possibility that it is an activity the very practice of which can improve those who engage in it. To suggest that cooking might be such an activity again involves challenging Plato's distinction between bodies and souls and between knowledge and knack." Cooking (substitute "rhetoric") might be beneficial precisely because of its embodiedness. Heldke writes, "Cooking might in fact be an activity which improves one precisely because it requires a constant interplay between so-called mental work and manual work. Its virtue lies in part in

the way it resists neat divisions between bodies and souls." Both food and rhetoric offer opportunities to affirm the terrestrial and provide an alternative to philosophies and pedagogies based on Platonic ideals. There is a rhetoric, and attendant philosophy, of working through, or living with, the complexity between the celestial and the terrestrial that happens at the intersection of cooking and rhetoric. How we work through, resist, or accept that confusion shapes our philosophy, our communication, and our pedagogies. Our decision to lean into or to turn away from, say, roasting meat and/or the social and religious tradition that grew up around it, is an example of the interplay between mental and manual work that tradition requires. To put it another way, eating consciously is lived philosophy.

Rhetoric of Food Pedagogies

A rhetoric of food has also been established through teaching. Classrooms provide a familiar arena of praxis and food, because of its universality, has often been used in rhetorical instruction. In this limited context, a "rhetoric of food" might be understood as food-based examples or models to be read rhetorically, as in a rhetoric textbook. This basic version of food rhetoric is practiced every time a writing instructor assigns a piece of food-based writing in a course packet or rhetoric reader. An example of this is Calvin Trillin's "The Extendable Fork" used as a model for "Strategies for Organizing Ideas and Experience: Division and Classification" in *Strategies for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader, 1/e* by Robert W. Funk, Susan X. Day, and Linda S. Coleman. The same piece appears in *The Riverside Reader* by Joseph F. Trimmer and Maxine Hairston. Trillin writes, "People who eat off other people's plates can be categorized in four types—The Finisher, The Waif, The Researcher, and The Simple Thief. I might as well admit right here at the beginning that I am

all four" (54 qtd. in Trimmer and Hairston). The short piece is an easy introduction to matters of classification and division in classical rhetoric. At the same time, Trillin's writing serves as a model for what the editors consider good writing.

The example above is not an isolated incident. Rhetoric textbooks frequently use food as a way of grounding rhetorical principles in the material world. In *Picturing Texts* by Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchikm and Cynthia Selfe, a postcard of apples is analyzed by John Szarkowski, Director Emeritus of the Department of Photography at the MOMA in New York. Szarkowski writes about "Apples Grown by Irrigation at Artesia, New Mexico," a photo postcard of apples with an inscription. "When we consider how an image communicates a message, then, it can be helpful to bear in mind the subject of the image (apples)" (130). *Inventing Arguments* (3rd ed.) by John Mauk and John W. Metz mentions food 46 times. *Good Reasons: Researching and Writing Effective Arguments* by Lester Faigley and Jack Selzer, uses Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* as an example of a causal argument, taking an abbreviated approach. Rather than excerpting the book, they use it as a jumping off point for a writing prompt. "Schlosser claims that one of the effects of fast food is the increase of overweight Americans," they write, followed by "To what extent do you think fast food is the cause of the trend toward excess weight?" (140). In *Critical Situations: A Rhetoric for Writing in Communities*, Sharon Crowley and Michael Stancliff compile a list of "issue-questions generated by our students in the spring of 2003, in a course focused on science writing and communication" (45). Several of the questions deal directly with food issues like the dangers of "genetically engineered food," the importance of "biodiversity to the future of our own species," the stocking of local lakes with trout, and the definitions and limits of nutrition

(45). With every new batch of rhetoric and writing textbooks, another layer of food-based examples is added to the casual accretion of food rhetoric.

Some approaches to rhetoric and writing instruction position food more centrally. In *Rural Literacies,* Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell explain their food politics unit for college composition courses, arguing that "Teachers of writing courses have a particularly interesting vantage point from which to pursue critical literacy work on issues of the food industrial complex" (171). They begin with the idea that "many large composition programs are situated in land-grant institutions where students majoring in agriculture, agricultural economics, and food science make up a considerable portion of the student population" (171). They also note that "a focus on food politics fits in well with the focus in many introductory composition courses critical analysis and argument" (171). Finally, they argue that "a focus on food politics complements efforts in our field to raise questions of environment and ecocomposition" (171). This is a modest version of an argument that is codified in federal law. While earthly considerations like food may not have been central to Plato's pedagogy, agriculture was explicitly part of the creation of land-grant colleges as stipulated in Title 7 of the *United States Code* ("Investment of Proceeds"). The code specifies funding for the "endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts." The code explicitly emphasizes "practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life." Expanding food from a writing prompt into a whole unit helps instructors model a kind of ecological thinking that

teaches students to see the interconnectedness of the natural, constructed, and technological world and to understand how this interconnectedness shapes writing.

Another exemplar of how to use food in rhetoric and writing classrooms comes from "Teaching Taboos: An Annotated Bibliography of Unconventional Resources for the Rhetoric Classroom" by Megan Condis and Sarah Alexander in *Enculturation*. Condis and Alexander use food as a way to ease students into talking about taboos. They write that, "Most students do not realize that they have painstakingly absorbed a number of rules from their culture about which kinds of edible matter are 'food' and which are disgusting and vile." Explaining to students that food is "culturally constructed is an excellent way to open up a conceptual crack into the matrix of morality, manners, and taboos that they think of as natural and universal, which in turn might short-circuit feelings of discomfort when more dearly held assumptions are challenged." Food can help students access the idea that taste (literally and figuratively) is culturally constructed. Furthermore, it can be used to introduce concepts such as rhetorical identification and ethos. In "Nourishing the Academic Imagination: The Use of Food in Teaching Concepts of Culture," Lucy Long writes that "food is a primary tool of enculturating individuals into the social rules and *ethos* of a particular culture: learning how and what to eat is synonymous with becoming civilized" (235). Long advocates the use of food in class because of its universality. She writes that "using food as a primary subject for class lectures and discussions facilitates class participation; everyone can speak authoritatively on his or her own foodways experiences, and students frequently bring in samples of foods they have researched" (254). Incidentally, the kind of food rhetoric we have seen in writing classrooms has its counterpart in literature classrooms, as can be seen in the edited collections *Cooking by the Book: Food in Literature and*

Culture by Mary Anne Schofield and *Hunger and Thirst: Food Literature* by Nancy Cary. The pedagogy that accompanies such collections is explained by Jennifer Cognard-Black and Melissa A. Goldthwaite in the *College English* article "Books That Cook: Teaching Food and Food Literature in the English Classroom." They write, "Through the record of food traditions, culture and history are transmitted as well as transformed—practices of sharing, preparing, and eating recipes both create and convey human interactions. Moreover, like humanity, food is both elastic and contradictory" (422).

Rhetoric of Food in Foodways

Despite the fact that we deploy food as a discussion topic in our classrooms, food has only—until very recently—played a bit part in rhetoric and writing instruction. We might, then, look for a rhetoric of food in disciplines like anthropology, more specifically the area known as foodways. Foodways has its own academic texts and methodologies, but the centrality of writing and recording to the disciplinary identity of foodways suggests potential for rhetoric-foodways collaborations. The importance of writing and recording is foregrounded in foodways. Books such as *Foodways and Folklore: A Handbook* by Jacqueline S. Thursby introduce students to the classifications, methods, and texts used in the discipline and highlight the importance of language. For example, Thusby writes, "Many kinds of verbal folklore refer to foods, including food jokes, food motifs and edible elements in fairy tales, mythology, proverbs, and even slogans" (1). While foodways focuses on the collection and distribution of such verbal and oral folklore, it also makes possible the rhetorical analysis of these folklife artifacts. Moreover, foodways sees writing as central to its disciplinary identity. Consider the introduction, titled "Writing/Eating Culture," to the edited

collection *Eating Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Food*: "As indicated in our title *Eating Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Food*, we take our cue from the 1986 volume edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetic and Politics of Ethnography*, now recognized as a ground-breaking essay collection." They continue: "The issues tackled there went far beyond the concerns of social anthropology and its methods as a discipline. The volume established the approach to culture as a contested signifying practice and, with the emphasis on textual strategies"(3). In foodways, eating, writing, and identity are intertwined.

Perhaps more importantly for rhetoricians, foodways is a key discipline where rhetorical analysis of food is already taking place. For example, the journal *Food and Foodways*, published since 1985, often uses rhetorical analysis as a method for uncovering meaning in food. Jay Mechling's "Boy Scouts and the Manly Art of Cooking," looks at the rhetoric of scouting cookbooks and its effect on identity formation in young men. He writes, "Scouting has maintained across its entire history a rhetoric identifying 'caring for others' as suitable for masculine boys and men" (77). Mechling uses rhetorical analysis to explain how the rhetoric of scouting reflects cultural tensions around gender, finding that "in any historical moment the felt tensions between traditional masculinity and a non-feminine masculinity of care and service played out in the rhetoric" (77). Mechling looks at several issues of concern to rhetoric in recent decades, including gender, identity formation, and how organizational rhetoric changes over time.

Even when rhetoric is not explicitly invoked as a method or discipline, a rhetorical perspective on food can be developed through gender studies. Meals, after all, are gendered. In *Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality*, Alice P. Julier writes about the ways different foods are culturally constructed to appeal to men or women. Writing about the queen of

etiquette, Emily Post, Julier notes how this gender information is distributed via social protocols. Julier quotes Post instruction to women: "don't feed hungry men bouillon, dabs of hors d'oeuvres, samples of fruit salad, and meringues" (42). As the subtitle of Julier's work suggests, we sometimes—in addition to passing along positive traditions related to revelry and camaraderie—pass along inequalities through food traditions. Sometimes our mores and manners highlight and exacerbate these inequalities. Other times, our spaces exacerbate inequality. In "Counterintuitive: How The Marketing of Modernism Hijacked the Kitchen Stove" in *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies*, Leslie Land looks at the standardization of kitchen workspaces "in spite of the widely accepted dictum that work surfaces should be tailored to the height of the user" (41). Land traces the standardization back to modernism and the "continuous countertop," which was the "child of Bauhaus and the assembly line" (55). While modernist design aesthetics are still valued in our culture (see Apple's market capitalization), they often come at a cost. Land writes about technological lock-in that comes with the continuous countertop. To achieve a clean aesthetic, features are removed. In the case of the stove, it was the adjustable legs, which were removed so the height could be standardized at 36 inches, just like the continuous countertop. Implied in this aesthetic is an ideal height and an ideal body. Implied in these concatenated expectations—the ideal (modern) kitchen, the ideal body, the ideal cook—is the idea that discomfort is a consequence for kitchen workers who fall short of the ideal. Land writes, "The Sears, Roebuck catalog of 1927 [...] offered stoves with cooktops anywhere from 29 1⁄3 to 33 ¾ inches tall." But, she continues, "the kitchen stove turned its back on progress, devolving into a rigidly conformist box that was—and is—uncomfortable for almost everybody" (41). Whether scholars look at the rhetoric of cookbooks, of etiquette books, or at the design of

kitchens themselves, gender implications abound, and rhetorical analysis is a useful tool for probing and analyzing inequalities.

Rhetoric of Food in Food Studies

Foodways, cultural studies, and gender studies have all displayed an interest in the rhetoric of food. But perhaps more than anywhere else, the emerging, multidisciplinary field known as "food studies" is a rich node of food-oriented rhetorical activity. In "Writing The Food Studies Movement," Marion Nestle explains the expansion of food-related academic work. She writes, "various approaches to such questions—historical, cultural, behavioral, biological, and socioeconomic—are now often grouped under the rubric food studies. As such, food studies can be considered to constitute a new movement, not only as an academic discipline but also as a means to change society" (160). Nestle's quote here is echoed by Ken Albala in the introduction to the *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*. Albala writes that food studies is "not perhaps a discipline" but "a critical mass of professional academics" who "have devoted a significant proportion of their energy to questions of food supply, patterns of eating, in fact, all aspects of food culture or foodways" (xv). This multidisciplinary critical mass already includes rhetoric. *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods* notes that food studies is "the study of the relationships between food and the human experience" (3). This research methods book has a chapter, rooted in Heideggerian philosophy, titled "Using Material Objects in Food Studies Research" that mirrors rhetoric's recent forays into "thing theory," "object oriented ontology," "object oriented rhetoric," and "speculative realism." Although food studies is relatively new, it draws theory from generations of the same cultural critics as philosophy, rhetoric, and anthropology. *Food and*

Culture: A Reader (Third Edition) edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, perhaps the best example of a canon of contemporary food-oriented criticism, includes work from Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Claude Lévi-Strauss and others. Unlike some academic disciplines, food studies straddles the boundary between the university and the grocery store. Take, for example, *Gastronomica*, "the journal of food and culture," which takes an intellectual, academic approach to food. The journal is a striking example of a forum for the kind of peer-reviewed rhetorical analysis that can be deployed in (literally) the supermarket checkout line. Adrian Peace's rhetorical analysis of the slow food movement in "Barossa Slow: The Representation and Rhetoric of Slow Food's Regional Cooking" and "Terra Madre 2006: Political Theater and Ritual Rhetoric in the Slow Food Movement" in *Gastronomica* (Winter 2006 and Spring 2008, respectively) show that rhetorical analysis can be deployed in not just interdisciplinary ways, but also can be aimed at a non-academic audience. Peace uses rhetorical concepts such as "ethos" ("Terra Madre" 37 "Barossa Slow" 55, 58), "authenticity" ("Barossa Slow" 52, 53, 57, 58 "Terra Madre" 33), and "style" (Terra Madre 38) to report on the way the slow food movement uses language to appeal to its constituency.

Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research is a major journal in food studies and a hub of food-related rhetorical analysis. Such pieces include: "Entangled in Our Meals: Guilt and Pleasure in Contemporary Food Discourses" by Alice Julier (Spring 2004), "Defining World Hunger: Scale and Neoliberal Ideology in International Food Security Policy Discourse" by Lucy Jarosz (March 2011), "Negotiating Popular Obesity Discourses in Adolescence: School Food, Personal Responsibility, and Gendered Food Consumption Behaviors" by Nicole Taylor (December 2011) and "Let

Them Eat Organic Cake: Discourses in Sustainable Food Initiatives" by Meghan Lynch and Audrey Giles (September 2013).

How to Approach a Rhetoric of Food

As I mentioned in the beginning, in the *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies* under "Avenues for Future Research" in the chapter "Food and Communication," Arthur Lizie explicitly articulates the need to "establish a rhetoric of food" and lays out specific areas for further research, arguing "there are large swaths of public discourse that have gone unexplored from a communication point of view" (27). He then poses a series of possible research questions:

> How have public leaders (presidents, prime ministers) talked about food? How has food been used rhetorically (and visually) in election campaigns? What would a rhetorical analysis of the discourse surrounding the US Farm Bill reveal (and how has the discourse changed over time)? What rhetorical devices do message posters use in online discussion forums about food? Further, we lack an understanding of how ideas about food circulate within cultural arenas divorced from (or peripheral or parallel to) mediated areas. For example, what role does communication (persuasive or not) have in the CSA, farmers' market, and community gardens cultural arenas? Within the restaurant workers community? (27)

I quote Lizie at length for three reasons: First, part of what I have been attempting to do here is to outline my particular rhetoric of food in answer to his call. Second, all of my chapters build on the research questions he poses about online discussions of food and the

division of food discourse into mediated and unmediated areas. Between the big task of establishing a rhetoric of food and the smaller task of articulating specific research questions and methodologies, there is the work of framing the approach to rhetoric and food. Returning to the discipline of rhetoric and composition with the realization that a rhetoric of food is emerging but distributed, I now want to consider how we might frame discussions of food for disciplinary audiences. The range of options for combining food and rhetoric can be illustrated using three very different conversations: Peter Elbow's chapter "Cooking—Writing" in *Writing Without Teachers* (1976), Massimo Montanari's *Food Is Culture* (2004), and Roland Barthes' "Toward a Psychology of Contemporary Food Consumption" (1961). We can use these works to show three different ways to link rhetoric and food: cooking is like writing, food is accompanied by rhetoric, and food is rhetoric.

Food and rhetoric have often been linked figuratively, as Plato joined rhetoric and cookery. Figures do, indeed, influence the way we perceive the world. "The Rhetoric of Food" by Eivind Jacobsen in *The Politics of Food* outlines how different kinds of metaphors used to talk about food change our worldview. Building on the work of George Lakoff, Jacobsen begins with the idea that rhetoric and food are linked, and that our ideas about one affect our experience of the other. "Rhetorical tropes are essential for the conceptualization of food, food production, and consumption" (59). In a chiastic way, food can also be a way of understanding rhetoric and writing. In Elbow's usage of "cooking," words on a page are transformed during this process the way food is transformed during the process of cooking. For Elbow, "Cooking is the interaction of contrasting or conflicting material." Whether in writing or in the kitchen, cooking is "the process of one piece of material (or one process) being transformed by interacting with another" and "one piece of material [...] being

dragged through the guts of another." Whether it is cooking by way of skillet or cooking by way of the digestive tract, cooking is about breaking things down. Craig Stroupe explains Elbow's metaphor in "Visualizing English: Recognizing the Hybrid Literacy of Visual and Verbal Authorship on the Web": "Cooking represents the essence of Elbow's system, whereby a potentially social sense of conflict and difference is textualized and internalized into the writer's private process of invention" (613). Unfortunately, Elbow does not extend the metaphor or refer to actual food at all, but the fact that he links the two at all suggests a colloquial connection between writing instruction and food.

In contrast to Elbow's metaphorical connection between food and writing, Montanari argues for a connection between rhetoric and food stronger than what is implied by mere simile. It is not just that cooking is *like* writing or that cooking is *like* rhetoric, but that food becomes rhetorical, and thus culturally significant, when paired with language. Montanari writes that "food acquires full expressive capacity thanks to the rhetoric that in every language is its necessary complement" (102). He continues, articulating food as one of the available means of persuasion. "Rhetoric is the adaptation of speech to the argument, to the effects one wants to arouse or create. If the discourse is food, that means the way in which it is prepared, served, and eaten" (102). Without the rhetorical trappings involved in preparation, service, and consumption, food would be slop. But so interconnected are the rhetorical aspects of food with the food itself, that even the act of unceremoniously serving gruel is now laden with rhetorical significance.

Roland Barthes goes even further than Montanari. For Barthes, food is expressive not only because it is accompanied by social and cultural sign systems; food is, in and of itself, expressive. In "Toward a Psychology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Barthes

writes, "an item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies. That is to say that it is not just an indicator of a set of more or less conscious motivations, but that it is a real sign, perhaps the functional unit of a system of communication" (24). For Barthes, food is language and, as such, a system. Once systematized, food cannot cease to signify. "As soon as a need is satisfied by standardized production and consumption, in short, as soon as it takes on the characteristics of an institution, its function can no longer be dissociated from the sign of that function. This is true for clothing; it is also true for food" (24). And, by the way, Barthes is not writing about only the overtly demonstrative aspects of food service, but all of it. He writes, "I mean not only the elements of display in food, such as foods involved in rites of hospitality, for all food serves as a sign among members of a given society" (24). For those who might think that food is a fundamental human need, Barthes agrees, but his point is that even our most basic needs signify through their structure. "Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food" (25).

We can observe both strong and weak connections between rhetoric and food in and around the disciplines in the liberal arts. Food is rhetoric or food is like rhetoric. And we can observe the popularity of food as a subject matter in works from classical poetry to literary masterpieces to the contemporary mainstream media. But there is no necessary connection between food and rhetoric, and so it is also not necessary to choose between strong and weak connections. We can agree with Barthes and Montanari that food is capable of being rhetorical and at the same time agree that food is not fundamental to rhetoric. The turn toward food, then, signals a practical understanding of *kairos*. (This is an opportune time to

be studying food.) But it also suggests a philosophical position, that we can learn something about how knowledge is structured by studying food specifically. This is because the turn toward food signals a concern with materiality. The inclusion of food in rhetorical studies is not arbitrary or opportunistic. It is a real-world counterbalance to the assumption that rhetoric is somehow virtual, a realm of knowledge superimposed on top of everyday experiences. Addressing food forces us back into an understanding of rhetoric that is embodied, where clear distinctions between rhetor, message, and audience are again muddled by emplaced, embodied realties[1]. This move did not start with the turn toward food. Rather, the turn toward rhetoric and food as intertwined subjects of study is part of a philosophical tradition of complicating the Cartesian mind/body dualism that goes back hundreds of years (Highmore 119). So while the exigence is convenient, the larger argument about food and rhetoric is not as time-sensitive as it might initially appear.

Still, in the past two decades, there has been an emerging body of food-oriented pieces by rhetoric scholars in English departments, writing programs, and communications departments. The surge in food-related media has made it seem recently rhetorically significant. In "On Establishing a More Authentic Relationship with Food: From Heidegger to Oprah on Slowing Down Fast Food" in the *The Rhetoric of Food*, Kara Shultz sums up the popularity of food media in the decade from 2002 and 2012: "In the past ten years there has been an upsurge of interest in the subject of food within the US. Two cable channels (Food Network and Cooking Channel) feed viewers' desire to consume the subject 24/7 through entertaining food contests and diverting celebrity chefs" (223). It is not only TV, but also

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[1] Rhetoric and composition scholars who study food might do well to build on rhetoric and composition's ongoing interest in writing and rhetoric as embodied practices, including Margaret Syverson's *A Wealth of Reality*, Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley's *Rhetorical Bodies*, and Debra Hawhee's *Bodily Arts*.

literature. "Thousands of books on the subject of food have been published in the past ten years," writes Shultz (223). Similarly, In "The Urban Food Database and the Pedagogy of Attunment" in the *PRE/TEXT* special issue on "food theory," Jody Nicotra locates the exigence for an analysis of food rhetoric in the World Health Organization's 1997 declaration of an obesity epidemic that resulted in consumption-related diseases and a "series of much-publicized outbreaks of food-borne illness" (98). On her way to an argument about the connections between databases and food foraging, she further establishes exigence by listing 10 popular books and documentaries from 2001 to 2009 that reflect the politicization of food. Schultz and Nicotra's overviews of the increase in popular media on food suggest that rhetoric (in both communications and English departments) is reflecting and analyzing what is happening in the culture at large. And this seems to be true. In the last decade alone, food articles in rhetoric-oriented journals like *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Rhetoric Review*, *College English*, and *PRE/TEXT*, as well as edited collections *Food as Communication | Communication as Food* and *The Rhetoric of Food* have proliferated. Take, for example, the aforementioned *College English* "Special Focus" issue on food in 2008. In "Consuming Prose: The Delectable Rhetoric of Food Writing," we are right there in the kitchen with Lynn Z. Bloom as she invites us to dinner and attempts to "identify and analyze the essential elements of the rhetoric of food writing that make it such a joy to read and to write." At the time she was writing in 2008, Bloom noted Susan J. Leonardi's "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster á la Riesholme, and Key Lime Pie" in *PMLA* as a "notable exception" to the rarity of academic texts that "address rhetorical issues in food writing" (349). A rhetoric of food was not quite simmering in 1989 when Leonardi's article appeared, but the table was set. In another example from *College English*, Stephen Schneider

looks at the discourse of the Slow Food movement in "Good, Clean, Fair: The Rhetoric of the Slow Food Movement." Schneider writes, "For Slow Food advocates, any dialogue between realms naturally needs to be mediated by a strong set of principles that can in turn guarantee the quality of food and food production" (390). Schneider shows how the founder of the Slow Food movement uses key words, in this case, "good" and "clean" and "fair" as a way to "clearly articulate" the movement's values.[2] A similar approach is taken in "The Organic Food System: Its Discursive Achievements and Prospects" by David M. Nowacek and Rebecca S. Nowacek. Although the authors take an interdisciplinary approach (one is a sociologist, the other a rhetoric and composition scholar), their analysis is rhetorical. "Our analysis focuses on the discursive struggle among individuals and groups to fix, however temporarily, the meaning of the term 'organic'" (404). They show how organic discourse actually created the market for organic food. They write, "What distinguishes the organic foods market is the emergence of a distinct discourse, a discourse that was in fact necessary for (not just coincident with) the emergence of that market." This is reminiscent of Brian Massumi's, in *Parables for the Virtual,* claim that "an invention is something for which a use must be created" (96). So, too, a market is something for which a discourse must be created. You cannot sell something "organic" without inventing a whole rhetoric around the term (and its visual identifiers, like the USDA's organic label). But as soon as you begin the work of inventing a discourse, things get political. Nowacek and Nowacek write, "The term 'organic' serves as the central and highly contested mediational tool within the organic foods activity system, a system whose goal is to facilitate the exchange for organic foods" (404).

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[2] Rhetoric and composition scholars might also be interested in Sharon Bassett's *College Composition and Communication* poem "Slow-Food" which predates Slow Food International's manifesto by several years.

While I've resisted the temptation to posit a fully-formed disciplinary rhetoric of food, articles like the ones above show that rhetoric and composition does have a history of writing about food. This food writing history converges with the larger disciplinary history to create a particularly rhetorical perspective in a multidisciplinary field of study. To illustrate this, let us begin with editor John Schilb's introduction to the *College English* issue:

> For ages, our field tended to treat cookery as Plato does in this diatribe from the Phaedrus: that is, as unworthy of intellectuals' love. How things have changed! Much of our discipline has come to take seriously the two subjects that Plato scorns here. As this special issue recognizes, the field now studies both rhetoric and cookery—including the rhetorics accompanying production and delivery of food. (345)

Once we begin to unpack Schilb's "rhetorics accompanying production and delivery of food," the vast meanings of "rhetorics" "accompanying" "production" "delivery" and "food" become evident. As a field, we have never settled on a meaning of even the first term, let alone the ones that follow, "of" and "and" (perhaps) excluded. There is a lingering self-consciousness about practicing the two subjects that Plato scorns. After all, it still bears mentioning that the field has only recently begun to take food and rhetoric "seriously." That history is part of our disciplinary food rhetorics. However, rhetoric's adoption of food is not merely a reflection of what is trending in popular culture, but also a reflection of shifting perspectives within the discipline. The complex scenes of engagement where we see discursive struggles play out, as with the term "organic," have increasingly been rhetoric's domain. An artifact as simple as an organic label or a box of cereal can be a portal into a

rhetorical ecology and these ecological perspectives on rhetoric have developed alongside the proliferation in food media. It was only a matter of time before they converged.

Communication Technology in Food Discourse

Thus far, I've been compiling a rhetoric of food from work in textbooks, in publications in other disciplines, in popular publications, and in rhetoric and composition publications. I've shown that rhetoric and food have gone together in many ways and yet a rhetoric of food is distributed across many disciplines. I've shown the exigence for compiling a disciplinary rhetoric of food from the culture around us. Now, I am compelled to complicate matters by including technology in the conversation. This move is enabled by recent perspectives in rhetoric and composition that build on complexity and ecological theory. A subset of techno food studies has started to emerge at the intersection of food, rhetoric, and technology. For example, in "Dinner time discourse: Convenience foods and industrial society," *Food as Communication | Communication as Food*, John R. Thompson uses the clock to question the fast food/slow food binary. He writes, "To consider fast food and slow food is to consider temporal experience—specifically pace—in the context of the human condition. At the center of this fast/slow dialectic is the nature of industrial society" (181). *The Larder: Food Studies Methods from the American South* edited by John T. Edge, Elizabeth Engelhardt and Ted Ownby, mentions rhetoric no fewer than a dozen times and contains a section on "Spaces and Technologies." In one example from that section, "Eating Technology at Krispy Kreme," Carolyn De La Peña shows how the donut company employed a rhetorical understanding of space and technology by arranging its stores in a way that highlighted donut manufacturing technologies. De La Peña examines how production

technology could be part of a marketing strategy that promises not just doughnuts but technological innovation on an industrial level. Similar observations can be seen when we look at domestic kitchen technologies. In *Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat*, Bee Wilson writes about the technology of measuring in the kitchen. In the same way that scientific instruments are tools used to construct arguments in the discourses of the sciences, measuring instruments in the kitchen are used to construct cookbooks that give the cook the illusion of control, uniformity, and replicability.[3] These technologies—from digital scales to measuring cups—may indeed give the cook the ability to build confidence by replicating a dish many times. According to Wilson, even things as seemingly biological as the overbite are social constructions that are created through the use of technologies like knives. At the very least, the invention of the technology of utensils certainly has rhetorical implications for our table manners, an arena where persuasion is as much about etiquette and comportment as it is about what we say. There is a case to be made that a technology as simple and food-centric as the fork has an effect on everything from our bite to our decorum at the table. A techno-ecological perspective can help us attune ourselves to how the things we consider "technological" are actually, just like words, part of our constructed environments. Once we begin to see technology this way, it, too, becomes rhetorical.

In "Eating Communities: The Mixed Appeals of Sodality" in *Eating Culture*, The Johns Hopkins University foodways researcher Sidney Mintz connects our use of writing

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[3] For more on how measuring instruments help construct rhetoric, see *Instruments and the Imagination* by Thomas L. Hankins and Robert J. Silverman. They write, "Instruments have a rhetorical purpose. They teach, explain, persuade, and even command. Instruments have authority, they speak for nature, but how they speak and in what language is far from obvious. Instruments are like language because they mediate between the observer and what is being observed—between the subjective mind and the objective natural world." See also *Starring the Text: The Place of Rhetoric in Science Studies* by Alan G. Gross.

with our need for food. Mintz writes, "our uniquely human capacity to generate new symbols is still with us, as is our universally animal need to be fed" (32). These intertwined needs, then, lead to new social formations. "Given the way our species imposes symbolic constructions upon material realities, the emergence of new eating communities, propped up by new symbols, must surely be an inevitable outcome" (32). As we build our symbolic constructions in new media, we see an emergence of virtual social organizations focused on food. These organizations (and organisms) are made by the accretion of repeated online symbolic activities. Click. Click. Upload. Post. Send. Click. Update. Revise. Click. Like. Retweet. Follow. Play. Click. Click. Hover. Click. Cook. Eat. Repeat.

Overview of the Project

In this project, I study mimesis in online food discourse, and I'm particularly interested in the way that food rhetoric develops through repetition and reiteration. I make, capture, and examine online digital artifacts using a variety of methodologies. In each chapter, I look at a different food, rhetor, network, and set of repetitions.

In "Burrito Rhetorics," I look at the burrito, how Chipotle deploys online videos to sell burritos, and how the Chipotle burrito fits in with historical iterations of the burrito. I apply a "cultural biography of things" approach to the burrito using online timeline and mapping technologies. This process led to the creation of multiple online artifacts including a timemap and two web videos. I use the story of the burrito to contextualize the way that Chipotle uses online video to transmit affect and build its corporate ethos. Studying burritos has been generative: a seemingly small, limited object allows me to tease out the

microrhetorics that are at work in shaping our everyday choices and the ways that we talk about them.

In the next chapter, "Kale Rockstar" I suggest that kale can be associated the books of Michael Pollan, whose work, I argue, constitutes a genre that establishes a set of conventions for how we think and communicate about food. I begin by looking at how Chipotle builds its corporate ethos by citing Michael Pollan's books on its website. Then I approach Pollan's body of work as a genre, showing how it establishes certain conventions in food discourse. These conventions set up certain expectations not just for his audience, but for the audiences and publics of those who cite him. We see transmissions of these conventions throughout food networks.

In "Kombucha Talk," I look at how fermented foods like kombucha travel through alternative food networks, like groups of fermentos led by Sandor Katz, until they have proliferated to the point of becoming mainstream. I begin by looking at how Michael Pollan engages with the world of countercultural food movements like fermentos. I argue that Pollan's engagement with fermentos signals a move into posthuman rhetorics. Building on the idea of micropolitics, I posit a compostmodern micro(be)politics that re-articulates the human not as an agentive individual governed by autonomy, but as an ecology itself, situated within other ecologies. This nested ecologies approach helps to examine the ways that persuasion happens on scales larger and smaller than the human.

In each of these chapters, I write about various kinds of mimesis, copying, and repetition. Mimesis adds three dimensions to this discussion of online repetition: It gives us a way to discuss the virtual representation of material things like food; it establishes a tradition of deliberate imitation for rhetorical instruction and social change; by way of

identification, it offers a framework for the way imitation results in and from identity formation. We learn to read, write, and think through the mimetic repetition of forms. We also learn to cook and eat through the repetition of forms. This repetition is increasingly complicated by technology. Mimesis offers what Matthew Potolsky calls a "memeplex" or "a co-adapted group of ideas or practices that tend to be imitated together" (160). Another way of looking at mimesis here is as a set of conceptual tools that aids in the construction of theories about repetition. Throughout this work, I will use mimesis as the emulsifier that holds together elements that may want to separate. In each chapter, I explore a different aspect of mimesis.

Our *ethe* are formed, in part, by our repeated actions. We repeat the actions of others and we repeat ourselves. In the chapters outlined above, I draw on the rhetorical tradition to explore the repetitions that happen at intersections of food and technology. Recursively, my rhetoric—the language I use, my pedagogy, the way I think—is reshaped by what I find at those intersections. There is a risk that focusing on something so mundane as food or something as seemingly insignificant as a burrito might devalue rhetoric. However, it is a risk that I'm willing to take. In "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks" in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Greg Dickinson writes about "the importance for rhetorical critics to investigate banal, everyday, material practices" (23). He too understands that these arguments, when composed of pedestrian foods, come with risks. He acknowledges that focusing on the mundane "lays us open to criticism," writing: "In an (inter)discipline that is already worried about its place in the academy, focusing on those practices, institutions, rhetorics that are not, on the face of things, important further risks marginalizing us" (23). However, he continues, despite the risks, there is significance in the everyday. If "it is within

the everyday that we create ourselves, our communities and our politics, then few areas of study could be more important. And rhetoric, with its…focus on the pragmatic, is particularly well suited to this study" (23-4). I see the risks and agree they are worth taking, but I do not want a pragmatic conclusion here. I want to recognize that the everyday is not separable from the revolutionary.

To understand the stakes, we have to examine how microrhetorics engage with micropolitics. Micropolitics are little, often uncoordinated exertions of power within a group or system. Although they are small and commonplace, micropolitical actions can have larger effects when aggregated. And, as Jody Nicotra notes in "The Urban Food Database and the Pedagogy of Attunement" micropolitics can cut both ways: "sometimes micropolitics can be more dangerous than macropolitics" (99). Micropolitics can be small acts, aggregated over time, that support or condemn oppression, such as not eating at Chick-fil-A during the same sex marriage controversy or not buying Fritos during the Frito Bandito controversy (which I discuss in the first chapter). Micropolitics can be negative if they lull us into thinking that we have done enough simply by buying a burrito. But good or bad, micropolitics are never divorced from macropolitics. Building on Deleuze and Guattari, Brian Massumi says, "micropolitics and macropolitics are inseparable. We can never separate them because micropolitics moves through macropolitics, and vice versa" ("Grasping the Political" 9). For example, sometimes politicians use a particular restaurant to help shape their image on the campaign trail. Take, for example, Mitt Romney's high profile campaign stops and photo ops at Chipotle and contrast them with President Barack Obama's P.R. stunt of going out and ordering a bunch of burgers at Five Guys during the 2012 election (Norton). Later, Obama made a high profile walk to Chipotle for a burrito bowl and to Starbucks for a coffee

(Keith). These highly publicized visits to mainstream, corporate establishments operate as ways for politicians to identify with the American public. More often, the politics of burrito rhetorics are more subtle and complex. Massumi says that "even in wage-earning work, there is a micropolitical dimension created by management which is quite formidable, especially since the 1970s" ("Grasping the Political" 9). For example, the wages paid to fast-food workers are part of this micropolitical dimension. When protests over wages gather momentum and laws are passed and contested, there is a macropolitical response. Massumi says, "What is complicated is the mobilization of the micropolitical by the macropolitical and vice versa. We cannot ignore this complexity" ("Grasping the Political" 9). Chipotle's hiring practices, for example, contribute to this complexity. There is no discussion of burritos as micropolitics that is not also a discussion of the capital, media, and labor involved in making, selling, and serving those burritos. Even if the macropolitical is de-emphasized, it is there, lurking in the margins. The status of the I-9 of the person who makes your burrito is linked directly to national foreign policy, how we understand and police our borders, and how citizens understand themselves as a nation.

Food is a part of nation-building and the construction of national identities and borders; it is also part of the construction of individual identities in relation to these national identities. As Ken Albala writes in *The Banquet*, "the formation of the nation-state and the codification of a national cuisine usually progress in tandem" (119). Albala flips the menu, arguing that national cuisines, constructed and deployed by those in power, help create nations. (Bob Ney's 2003 renaming of "french fries" to "freedom fries" in congressional cafeterias is a particularly ham-handed exemplar.) In *Planet Taco*, Jeffrey Pilcher makes a similar argument, writing, "National cuisines, which are also imagined through a process of

culinary tourism...manipulate the foods of regional and ethnic minorities for ideological and commercial purposes." For example, Mexico appealed to UNESCO to add Mexican traditional cuisine to its list of "intangible cultural heritage." UNESCO states that "Inscriptions on this List help to mobilize international cooperation and assistance for stakeholders to undertake appropriate safeguarding measures" ("Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage"). This sort of thing is never simple. Part of the heritage that Mexico is safeguarding is tortillas ground on the metate, ("Traditional Mexican Cuisine") a practice that kept Mexican women occupied full-time until the process of making corn tortillas could be mechanized in the mid 20th century. Rachel Lauden writes in *Gastronomica* that, in Mexico, "women without servants could expect to spend five hours a day—one third of their waking hours—kneeling at the grindstone preparing the dough for the family's tortillas. Not until the 1950s did the invention of the tortilla machine release them from the drudgery" (41). The complexity involved in the intertwining macro-and-micropolitics of food is always multivalent and has positive and negative elements. Pilcher writes, "Anthropologists now conceptualize group identities, whether ethnic, racial, national, or otherwise, as a process that is constantly evolving, and foods provide tangible collective representations of these affiliations." Through the repeated performance of these representations, we become who we are as groups of eaters and citizens. Pilcher writes, "Cuisines can serve to police group boundaries either through the rules created by insiders such as Jewish dietary laws or through stereotypes ascribed by outsiders, for example, 'frogs,' 'krauts,' and 'beaners.'" Foods can also help us to reach across borders to exchange hospitality with one another. Pilcher writes, "Nevertheless, foods can also offer enticing bridges between societies, encouraging outsiders to sample an unfamiliar culture in a relatively risk-free situation." This sort of

"culinary tourism," is becoming big business. He writes, "The intentional exploration of the foods of another group, has become a rapidly growing industry. The ideal of authenticity, of getting food prepared the way it is supposed to be, is central to the experience." However, as that experience is packaged for sale (and long before), there is the risk of another Frito Bandito. Pilcher reminds us that "advertisements often sell ethnic food to mainstream consumers by using exotic and demeaning images such as the Frito Bandito and the Taco Bell dog, conveying images of Mexicans as outlaws or animals." This tourist/native, inside/outside, host/hostage relationship always involves power differentials. Drawing on the seminal work of Sidney Mintz, Pilcher writes, "The differences between 'inside' and 'outside' meanings invariably reflect unequal relations of power." One of the things I try to demonstrate is that these inside/outside differences are not merely reflections of unequal power relations. These unequal power relations are constituted by the reiteration of those differences; we perform them every time we eat. Once you start looking, you find everywhere the interconnectedness of rhetoric, food, and technology. On one hand, the "work" of this work has been *making* those connections. That is, food, rhetoric, and technology are interconnected because I make them so. On the other hand, I am merely retracing trails trampled down by others. If the work of this work is making those connections—of establishing a rhetoric of food—the joy of this work is repeatedly recognizing that I am not alone in this endeavor.

"Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something."

—Pancho Villa

Chapter One
Burrito Rhetorics:
Irreducible Modularity and Transmittable Networks

Introduction

You walk into a Chipotle Mexican Grill, step up to the front of the line where you begin with your choice of filling. The burrito maker asks, "What can I get for you?" Your responsibility—to yourself, to the line behind you, to the employee asking you, to everyone invested in the exchange—is to respond to the person addressing you. You can *kind of* say what you want, but you also *kind of* have to order. You can exercise a combinatorial logic, but you can only choose from a limited range of ingredients. You can sit down at a table but you will wait forever for someone to serve you. The rhetorical ecology has been constrained and mapped out long before you utter a word. You are herded through a line, prompted by cues, directed by workers. This simple act of ordering a burrito is semi-scripted. Persuasion does not take place at the moment you utter your choice of fillings. Persuasion does not begin with the founding of Chipotle or with CEO Steve Ell's post-culinary-school vision for it. At what point, then, were you persuaded to buy a burrito? Does this persuasion begin—as the Mayan-esque sculptures on the wall suggest—in an altogether previous civilization? Probably

not. However, the kind of persuasion I am alluding to happens on the scale of the century, not during a single mealtime.

Of course, the burrito *can* be seen as merely a meal. That it is a part of our pedestrian, quotidian lives, however, does not mean it is not also rhetorically significant. For Roland Barthes, food is rhetorical not only because it is accompanied by social and cultural sign systems (cf. Montanari 2006); food is expressive in and of itself. In "Toward a Psychology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Barthes writes, "an item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies. That is to say that it is not just an indicator of a set of more or less conscious motivations, but that it is a real sign, perhaps the functional unit of a system of communication" (24). For Barthes, food is language and, as such, a system. Once systematized, food cannot cease to signify. "As soon as a need is satisfied by standardized production and consumption, in short, as soon as it takes on the characteristics of an institution, its function can no longer be dissociated from the sign of that function. This is true for clothing; it is also true for food" (24). If food is a system of communication, then a burrito can be a node in that system. If we thoroughly explore this node, we find a dense network made up of places, historical events, migrations, repetitions, economics, and—everywhere—language and persuasion.

An Approach

How do we inquire into this network? How do we represent what we find? How do we assemble innumerable combinations of diverse ingredients from food history, rhetoric, and technology? Here I take a cue from Chipotle. Their business model—inspired by and adapted from Mission style burrito purveyors—has been wildly successful. The innovation

that they got from Mission District taquerias in San Francisco was the use of steam tables to customize orders and offer hospitality to a diverse range of tastes quickly and affordably. The layered technologies of refrigeration, refrigerated prep tables, steam tables, cutting boards, and tortilla warmers constitute what Gustavo Arellano calls, in *Taco USA,* the "stations of the burrito." I believe that this modular approach is well suited to our current moment in rhetoric and writing. There is a modular, database logic to it, which seems to be the logic of our times. Even expensive fine dining establishments like Grant Achatz's Alinea traffics in this logic. Katie Zabrowski writes about Achatz's Lamb 86, a modular configuration of 86 ingredients "[p]lated together on a single sheet of glass" on a grid, meant to be mixed with one another and eaten with the lamb (94). She explains "garnishments for the lamb, itself served separately as a kind of blank canvas, range from variations on ingredients such as blueberry, fava bean, black licorice, couscous, coffee, and smoke" (94). The result is a sort of improvisational, collaborative performance in that the dish "does not arrive at the table preformed as if to impose a particular combination of ingredients, but instead invites diners to join in its becoming" (94). Everything from pizza to salad is being Chipotlized. Food is relatively fresh and laid out in front of customers in modular pans and customers get to customize their orders. If customers want to know more about a particular ingredient, Chipotle is there to educate them, telling them stories about Niman Ranch pork or the tall grass prairies where their food is raised. But an unpacking of these stories reveals that modular ingredients—whether in rhetoric or food service—are irreducible. For example, a recent controversy over a pork supplier at Chipotle underscores the role of story in—and the need for inquiry into—any particular ingredient on the menu. While Chipotle does serve some storied Niman Ranch pork, until very recently, at least a

third of its meat for carnitas came from another company that it had to suspend for failing to meet its animal welfare standards (Strom). Behind every ingredient in every modular hotel pan at every restaurant, there are stories. A recent online interactive infographic in the *Los Angeles Times* chronicles the exploitation of labor at Mexican mega-farms that provide the ingredients for those modular hotel pans (Marosi) at restaurants and institutions the world over, including the tomato slices in hotel pans at thousands of Subway restaurants. Subway was one of the earliest fast food restaurants to move meal construction out of the kitchen and into an exchange between the customer and the food handler involving food modules. Some have argued that Chipotle built on Subway's business model (Eaton), rather than that of Mission District taquerias. But the whiff of transparency that comes with the preparation of food right under customers' noses should—especially in light of Subway's past use of ingredients from unsavory farms or the yoga-mat/dough conditioner azodicarbonamide in its bread—lead to *more inquiry* about the ingredients that make up the ingredients, the labor conditions and compensation of the people preparing the food, and the social and cultural histories that helped to establish those conditions. So when I refer to the the modularity of the "stations of the burrito," and when I argue for Mission-style burrito rhetoric, I am not arguing for modules as irreducible wholes that cannot be further examined; on the contrary, I'm suggesting that modules are interrelated units that can be rearranged in complex activities, but also that those interrelated units are themselves made up of interrelated units that come from other complex systems. I will follow that modular logic here, layering ingredients from poststructural theory, food history, rhetoric, technological artifacts into one dish. Each paragraph is a modular element organized into stations. Go down the line, pick out the ingredients you like—a little protein, a little something spicy, something crisp and

juicy, something colorful—and take away from this what you want. Mission style burrito rhetoric may describe both the content and the style of my methodology here, but it is not the only method I employ. To explain the historical context of burritos, I use "a cultural biography of things" methodology in the first half of this chapter. This context will establish the framework for an extensive rhetorical analysis of Chipotle Mexican Grill's new media strategies in the second half of this chapter. Throughout the cultural biography of the burrito and the analysis of Chipotle's marketing I'll highlight a theatrical mimesis that erases the lines between parody and reality. I'll repeatedly return to this strand of mimesis and the related concepts of authenticity, McDonaldization, hyperreality, affect, and micropolitics.

Part I: The Iterability of Burritos

Ecological and Networked Rhetorics

A rhetoric of food, specifically a rhetoric of the burrito, can be situated in two larger trends in rhetoric and composition: the explanation of ecological frameworks and the explanation of network frameworks. For example, works by Jenny Edbauer Rice ("Unframing," *Distant Publics*) Margaret Syverson (*The Wealth of Reality*), Nathaniel Rivers ("Ecological, Pedagogical, Public"), Collin Gifford Brooke (*Lingua Fracta*), Sidney Dobrin and Christian Weisser (*Natural Discourse*) have established the concept of rhetorical ecologies (not distinct from "natural" ecologies). Jeff Rice (*Digital Detroit, "Urban Mappings"*), Clay Spinuzzi (*Tracing Genres*, *Network*), and Lev Manovich (*Language of New Media*) have established a perspective in which objects and humans communicate with one another across networks. Whether one uses the term "ecology" or "network" might suggest something about their perspective on technology, but the salient disciplinary detail is that the rhetorical situation has been productively broadened in many ways, leading to new discussions of ambient rhetoric, post-human rhetorics, rhetorics of place, object oriented ontology, and so on. I hesitate to group these conversations together, different as they are. However, they do illustrate a continued challenge to the limitations of narrower conceptions of rhetoric like James E. Kinneavy's rhetorical triangle ("Basic Aims of Discourse") and Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation ("The Rhetorical Situation"), a project that was well underway in the late '80s when Victor Vitanza urged the discipline to include "many competing, contradictory

voices—whether serious or comedic or downright silly or stupid, whether disciplinary or metadisciplinary or 'nondisciplinary,'" ("Critical Sub/Versions" 60-1).

"Deconstructing the Burrito"

Taking a seemingly insignificant food and treating it as a serious topic may seem to be testing the limits of rhetorical (in)discipline. There is a risk here of instantiating a joke. I'm not going to go so far as to say "I'm deconstructing the burrito," but if I were to say that, I would probably not be the first. In *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory* James K. A. Smith writes, that "the lexicon of deconstruction has permeated popular discourse and practices—from music to cuisine" (1). After noting that a "cover story for the October 2001 issue of *Food Product Design* spoke of 'deconstructing pies and turnovers,'" Smith assigns readers some homework: "As an exercise to get some sense of the ubiquity of deconstruction, I invite the reader to perform a Google search with the following formula: search of 'deconstruct' or 'deconstructing' + [any food item]" (130). So, of course, I googled "deconstructing burrito." The top link was an article from *The Onion* titled "Grad Student Deconstructs Take-Out Menu." In the article, Jon Rosenblatt can't turn off his urge to deconstruct long enough to get lunch. He says: "I just wanted to order some food from Burrito Bandito. Next thing I know, I'm analyzing the menu's content as a text, or 'text,' subjecting it to a rigorous critical reevaluation informed by Derrida, De Man, etc..." In this satire, the humor stems from wielding serious critical theory in the realm of minor food choices. Although it has been somewhat normalized by the likes of Barthes, and even Derrida, the juxtaposition of the high conceptual theory employed on a topic as mundane as the burrito comes with a bit of risk. Applying serious theory to a lighthearted discussion of everyday foods is the type of

thing that Aristotle suggests in *Rhetoric*, elicits "frames of mind in which men are easily stirred to anger." Aristotle writes, "those who reply with humorous levity when we are speaking seriously," make us angry, "for such behaviour indicates contempt." It is the type of thing that might have inspired Jacques Derrida to say, in response to an interview question about the sit-com *Seinfeld*, "Deconstruction, the way I understand it, does not produce any sitcom…If people who watch this think deconstruction is this, the only advice I have to give them is just 'Read. Stop watching sitcom and try and do your homework and read'" (Ziering). On the other hand, perhaps Derrida would appreciate "this opportunity to transform infelicity into delight," to declare that "it was all a joke" ("*Limited Inc a b c*" 72). Perhaps we gain "force" precisely by taking this kind of "risk" (72).

The Burrito Deconstructs Itself

There is nothing in deconstruction that leads directly to an article in *Food Product Design,* a satire in *The Onion*, a sitcom, or an extended discussion of a burrito; these things are testament to the widespread influence of the practice, or more probably, merely the word. And yet, one particular deconstructive move underlies my approach to food. Derrida says, "One of the gestures of deconstruction is to not naturalize what isn't natural—to not assume that what is conditioned by history, institutions, or society is natural" (Ziering). So while I'm not deconstructing the burrito, this project would not be possible without the deconstructive impulse to question the assumption that socially constructed foods have an ideal form. If we assume the burrito came about "naturally," we miss out on all the social and rhetorical events that went into its making, and that is where my interests lie. This is a different approach to writing about food than the restaurant review, which begins with the

notion of judgment rooted in ideals. I am here to say this: there is no ideal burrito. The burrito, always a compromise, has been shaped by social and historical events. Because of this, deconstruction is always already at work in food. Derrida writes that "deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes afterwards, from the outside, one fine day; it is always already at work in the work" (*Memoirs* 73). All one must do is "know how to identify the right or wrong element, the right or wrong stone—the right one, of course, always proves to be, precisely, the wrong one" (*Memoirs* 73). What is the right/wrong element in this burrito discourse? Perhaps it is the fact that the Burrito Bandito in *The Onion* is no joke. The illustration of the Burrito Bandito in *The Onion* is remarkably similar to the illustration used by the brick-and-mortar Burrito Bandito, a California restaurant chain. (See fig. 1.1.) The brick-and-mortar Burrito Bandito manages to be more stereotypical than the satirical one.

Fig. 1.1. The bricks-and-mortar Burrito Bandito (above) and the satirical Burrito Bandito from *The Onion* (below). No Satiation; nosatiation.com, 25 May 2014; Web; 30 May 2014.

The Restaurant as Theater

The Onion article, when read in terms of mimesis, highlights the right/wrong element in burrito discourse. "Mimesis" means many things, but in this instance, it refers primarily to a conversation about art imitating life that begins with Aristotle's *Poetics*. He writes, "the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons" and "universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated." We can laugh when the deconstructing burrito scene is recounted for us in a satirical way because we recognize what is being imitated. While Aristotle writes that the reason we can laugh at, say, *The Onion* article is that we perceive ourselves learning about nature though it, conventionalists in mimetic theory highlight the idea that what we are learning about is not nature but conventions, their limits, how to perform within them, and how to subvert them. This performance, then, in turn, shapes the conventions. As Matthew Potolsky notes in *Mimesis*, the radical dependence on social and historical context means that not only are the conventions always shifting, but that the performance of mimesis feeds (back into) the shifting of conventions. While Aristotle connects imitation to a universal pleasure, Potolsky writes that "recent theorists have pushed Aristotle's suggestions that art simulated the world much further, arguing that mimetic artworks appeal only to our conventional beliefs about reality" (4). He calls these theorists "conventionalists," writing: "The mimetic effects of the artwork are produced by a proper 'match' between the work and the expectations of its audience. Fidelity to convention, not fidelity to nature, is the source of mimesis" (4). This opens up the mimetic field from works of art, like satirical writing and plays performed in theaters, to all social situations that depend on conventions. It allows us to see performance

in the everyday. Potolsky argues that theatrical mimesis relies on and extends the conventionalist view of mimesis. "Because it depends so heavily on social conventions, theatrical mimesis underscores the limits of Plato's foundational distinction between copy and original" (75). The components of the theater, Potolsky writes, are not inherently mimetic. They only become so during a production through convention. "Theatrical mimesis, to this extent, is at once nowhere and everywhere. It is a form of attention, a conceptual envelope that surrounds and transfigures people and things rather than a discrete object, location or form of action" (75-6). In short, "theatrical mimesis can 'happen' anywhere at any time" (76). When you walk into a Chipotle Mexican Grill or a taqueria down the street, you are participating in a performance that relies on conventions in order to replicate this or that burrito machine. Chipotle Mexican Grill trained customers to observe its conventions by repetition. It repeats them hundreds of times a day at hundreds of locations worldwide. Like the theatre, the church, or the classroom, the fast-casual burrito joint relies on this kind of mimesis for its operation. And this mimesis, far from being merely the act of ordering a burrito, is established—as it is with the church, the theater, the classroom—with a host of rhetorical materials. Menus, programs, signage, ads, symbols, icons, images, sounds, lights, location—these are evidence of rhetorical activity through which mimesis is exercised. Pulitzer Prize-winning food critic Jonathan Gold says, "People talk a lot about the idea of restaurant as theater and the sound certainly comes into that, the taste of the food comes into that, the smell comes into that" (*Good Food*).

The Frito-Burrito Bandito

Reading the figure of the Burrito Bandito through theatrical mimesis, we find that there is no hard distinction between the parody Burrito Bandito in *The Onion* and the brick-and-mortar Burrito Bandito in California. Both are linked to archetype of the outlaw, which is used in advertising to give consumers permission to "walk on the wild side," in the parlance of the industry. In a popular advertising industry book, *The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes,* Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson write, "In a more everyday way, responsible, hardworking people may also be attracted to Outlaw archetype brands—not because they will ever disrupt anything or shock anyone, but as a way of letting off steam" (129). Building on Jungian archetypes (and exacerbating the problems with them) Mark and Pearson cite the Frito Bandito as a "lighthearted" incarnation of the outlaw, like the ones that appear in the brick-and-mortar Burrito Bandito and the parody bandito. But lighthearted or not, the Frito Bandito was a controversial character created to sell corn chips and was influential in spite of (or perhaps, as is so often the case in advertising, through) the controversy. The Frito Bandito was cited by *Texas Monthly* as one of "150 moments that made us who we are" (Dingus). The "us" is as problematic here as the reproduction and constitutive power of racist cartoons. These commercials were controversial not just because of their stereotyping (or archetyping, if you are in advertising), but because of the large problems in the culture that they represented. Marketing shapes and reflects our relationship to products, but it also shapes and reflects our relationship to each other. In *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* Chon A. Noriega writes, "Frito-Lay was not alone in using the 'bandito' ... in order to sell products. Indeed, the bandito appeared to be everywhere within popular discourse, from westerns to advertisements, raising questions about the political and economic concerns

embedded within its representation" (36). The bandito is a recurring character in the biography of the burrito. The fictitious Burrito Bandito menu that the fictitious grad student is deconstructing is itself a construct of a fictitious restaurant. Yet at every layer, these virtual constructs have material counterparts as seen in the menu of any Tex-Mex place, like the real-life Burrito Bandito chain of burrito places with five locations in California, the Frito Bandito commercials, and the corporate offices that create these products, concepts, and restaurants. These constructs result in seemingly-fictitious-but-real recombinations like Taco Bell's Frito-laden Beefy Crunch Burrito.[4] Drawing sharp distinctions between "real life" and "art" and stereotypes and marketing creates the atmosphere for "lighthearted" racism to proliferate. The oscillation of mimesis is always at work in "real life," "art," "advertising," and "stereotyping," informing each as it spins. Every time you see crisscrossed bandoleers on a cartoon bandit, on an illustrated jalapeño on a menu, on a friend or acquaintance at a costume party, or on a statue at a Mexican restaurant, you are getting a reiteration of what has become conventional Mexican revolutionary iconography. This familiar part of the the bandito stereotype developed in the shifting borderlands between what is now Mexico and Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. These conventions are not wholly fictitious; they have a history, which is evident in photographs of Pancho Villa. (See fig. 1.2.)

[4] Frito's continued role in the history of the burrito is evidenced by Taco Bell's Beefy Crunch Burrito, which is stuffed with Fritos. Taco Bell and Frito-Lay are former step siblings, both owned at one time by PepsiCo. (Taco Bell is now part of Yum! Brands).

Fig. 1.2. Pancho Villa and Frito Bandito. Will Burdette; https://www.flickr.com/photos/34276541@N08/14307611495/, 30 May 2014; Web; 30 May 2014.

But that history is also constructed through documents like photographs, which themselves were self-consciously created on both sides of the revolution. According to John Mraz in *Photographing the Mexican Revolution: Commitments, Testimonies, Icons*, even the archives that house the photographs and help (re)construct the history are themselves constructions. Countering "the mistaken impression that the Villistas were the group that most promoted itself with modern media" Mraz writes that it was the Constitutionalists who actually dominated image crafting:

> Although the dominance of Constitutionalist photography appears clear, it is still necessary to question whether that perception is not an expression of a well-known pattern in historiography: the documents of the winners are

> collected and preserved, while those of the losers are dispersed and many times lost. Notwithstanding the importance of bearing in mind the above methodological observation, I believe that there were more Constitutionalist photographers, and that they took more pictures for the same reason the movement won the war: they had more money. The number of photographers and images is a testimony to the leaders' vision of modern media usage.

The evidence does not suggest that the Villistas were the more ambitious self promoters, even given the possibility that the historiographical pattern of winners constructing history might skew matters. But this evidence does support the idea that the image of the outlaw is constructed not only by self-conscious image management—say posing for a photo with crisscrossed bandoliers—but also through the material realities that surround the construction of image. The fact that Constitutionalists took more pictures and won the war because they had more money helps contextualize images of the Villista revolutionary as somehow more treasured because, in addition to representing an underdog outlaw, "originals" are relatively more rare. Ironically, this historiographical evidence creates an aura around the bandito that encourages ersatz reproduction as more and more people attempt to profit from that aura.

Burrito Enthousiasmos

There is more to the burrito than the bandito. The burrito is currently seeing a resurgence in popularity and a kind of *enthousiasmos* is fueling this resurgence. People appear possessed by a burrito madness that has been building for a decade or so. In 2003, Calvin

Trillin noted that "Serious eaters in San Francisco tend to be loyal to their own burrito purveyor." His daughter gave him a T-shirt from Taqueria La Cumbre in "the spirit in which a rabid baseball fan from St. Louis might hand out Cardinals caps" (Trillin). In the decade or so that followed, the burrito has only gotten more press. I've been e-mailing with burritoeater.com editor Charles Hodgkins, who documented and rated his consumption of 1,000 burritos in the past decade (Hodgkins). To earn street cred when he started at *The San Francisco Chronicle* in 2006, Bill Addison ate 85 burritos in 10 weeks (and seemed to enjoy it) (Addison). Recently, Nate Silver gave the burrito the FiveThirtyEight treatment, complete with data mining, a six-person Burrito Selection Committee divided by region, and a taste test (Silver). I have willingly succumbed to burrito *enthousiasmos*, documenting my consumption of dozens of burritos in the past year (Burdette "And So It Begins"). All this burrito revelry obscures the burrito's complicated past, which also contains fuzzy origins and cultural and culinary limitations, complicated national identities, and immigration between nations. If we agree with Barthes that food "sums up and transmits a situation," then, when it comes to burritos, the situation has not always been a good one or even a clear one.

Burritos and Braceros

In *Taco USA*, Gustavo Arellano writes that for braceros, midcentury government-sponsored migrant laborers, the burrito was an "object of scorn." Cheap burritos were made for braceros by their American employers and the cost of lunch was deducted from their paychecks. In "A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program," Wayne D. Rasmussen writes, "The most persistent complaints concerned food and such complaints became the subject of discussion on the highest and lowest administrative levels" (229). It

was particularly difficult for the administration to adapt the food to the tastes of laborers from Mexico. Rasmussen writes that "it was suggested that one Mexican cook be brought in with every 50 Mexican workers" (230). But despite the suggestion, or perhaps because it was never fully implemented, the problem persisted. Rasmussen references a letter from the War Food Administrator to the Secretary of State explaining that "Securing able cooks who were Mexicans or who had had experience in Mexican cooking was a problem that was never completely solved" (229). Ultimately, the micropolitical problem of adapting food to the taste of the workers—the most basic act of hospitality—becomes symbolic of greater problems with the program and with the nation's foreign policy. Rasmussen writes:

> These criticisms of the feeding program are cited to show the difficulties in handling the program satisfactorily. These difficulties were real and demanded solutions. Between October 23, 1942 and April 8, 1944, of a total of 29,302 workers repatriated from California, Nevada, and Arizona, 1,010 gave dissatisfaction with food as the reason for requesting repatriation. (231)

The program's overall problems—difficulties with hospitality on a Derridian scale—came through in the act of feeding. In *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Derrida writes, "*ethics is hospitality*" (17). Derrida is writing about hospitality in terms of immigration, so the full weight of "hospitality" comes through here. Of course hospitality includes food, as in the "hospitality industry," but there is a deeper hospitality behind, say, the kind that refers to a restaurant or a dinner party. Derrida writes that "ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality." (17). It is the relationship to the ethical that gives hospitality both its weight and its power. In hospitality, power is wrapped up with food and shelter. There exists in hospitality "a reception or inclusion of the other which one seeks to appropriate,

control, and master according to different modalities of violence" (17). While it may seem hyperbolic to suggest that problems with burritos in a feeding program for migrant laborers amounts to violence, some level of control and mastery is being exercised in all instances of hospitality. Derrida writes that "there is a history of hospitality" and where there is history, there is "an always possible perversion of *the* law of hospitality (which can appear unconditional), and of the laws which come to limit and condition it in its inscription as a law" (17). In the history of this particular act of hospitality, the limits and conditions inscribed into law tell the story. The U.S. was at war. Farm workers were off to war. The War Food Administration had to ensure that the nation had enough to eat. So the War Food Administration needed the braceros. The administration invited them in. The administration heard their requests for better food, but ultimately could not fulfill them because it lacked the requisite cultural sensibilities or even the most basic prerequisites for hospitality. "The burrito's first widespread audience in the United States was braceros," Arellano writes. Of burritos, braceros said "¡Que malo!" (Acosta). As Rasmussen noted, criticisms of the feeding program points to problems with the bracero program, overall. It is not just that the burritos themselves were bad; bad were the conditions surrounding the serving of burritos to braceros.

Hospitality and Conditionality

In "Tastes of the 'Mongrel' City: Geographies of Memory, Spice, Hospitality and Forgiveness," Jean Duruz writes that "the creation of spaces in which to welcome 'others', wield authority and grant compromise, even in an interstitial or limited sense, enables us to reflect on the productiveness of Derrida's position on hospitality, and on forgiveness, as

paradoxical" (90). Flipping the order of operations, we might say also that reflecting on a Derridian hospitality full of contradictions encourages us to think, always, about the spaces we create to welcome 'others,' and how we regulate those spaces. This is not only about hospitality, but also about cosmopolitanism. In the preface *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness,* Simon Critchley and Richard Kearney write that Derrida "locates a double or contradictory imperative within the concept of cosmopolitanism: on the one hand, there is an unconditional hospitality which should offer the right of refuge to all immigrants and newcomers" (x). Critchley and Kearney write that, in practice, conditionality is the tension of hospitality. They write, "hospitality has to be conditional: there has to be some limitation on rights of residence" (x). To be pithy: rhetoric is the negotiation of the tension between conditional and unconditional hospitality. "All the political difficulty of immigration consists in negotiating between these two imperatives," Critchley and Kearney write. If hospitality is defined through conditionality, then we must further examine the conditions under which braceros came to the U.S. As noted above, some U.S. farm workers were off to war, but existing immigrant labor was also short in short supply. According to Ted Genoways in *The Chain: Farm, Factory, and the Fate of Our Food*, the bracero initiative "started as a short-term agreement with Mexico to import seasonal workers after President Franklin Roosevelt's signature on Executive Order 9066, authoring the establishment of internment camps, emptied fields of Japanese immigrants in 1942" (60-1). Mexican braceros were replacing farm workers that the U.S. had relocated and imprisoned, actions the Civil Liberties Act of 1987 found "were motivated by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." This racial prejudice was on display when the managing secretary of the Salinas

Vegetable Grower-Shipper Association, Austin E. Anson, was quoted in the *Saturday Evening Post*:

> We're charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. . . . We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown men. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over. . . . They undersell the white man in the markets. . . . They work their women and children while the white farmer has to pay wages for his help. If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we'd never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don't want them back when the war ends, either. (qtd. in *Korematsu v. United States*)

This prejudice was on display again in 1944 when, in *Korematsu v. United States*—in which the above statement was quoted—the United States Supreme Court found the internment camps constitutional. This is the milieu—one in which internment camps were ruled constitutional—in which the braceros were housed and fed. Given how much the War Food Administration needed braceros, and given that their complaints about the food were documented, the issue could have been negotiated. That it was not indicates a failure of hospitality. It is not only the difficulty of navigating the politics between conditional and unconditional hospitality that is on display with the bracero program, but also the unwillingness of the U.S. to treat the workers in its food supply chain as people, let alone guests. Given this legacy, it is not surprising to see burritos return to the middle of a national political conversation about immigrant labor in the past decade.

Chipotle, Labor, and Paper Machines

In another controversy in the burrito network, Chipotle fired hundreds of employees in 2011 after a crackdown by the federal government on undocumented workers. Your Chipotle burrito is likely made by someone making more than they would at Taco Bell. Chipotle is said to promote entry-level workers to higher wage jobs (Lutz, Gill). But this incident raises questions about Chipotle's labor issues, which in turn raises questions about our entire food system's labor issues. Fast food and fast-casual restaurant concepts rely on cheap labor for profitability. Given their higher food costs, Chipotle has to look elsewhere—to labor costs—to increase profits. Some have reported that the "company is known for its ability to control costs, particularly labor related expenses, while expanding rapidly" (Baertlein). Using labor to control costs while constantly expanding emphasizes the corporation's need to meet shareholder demands. The problem, it seems, is systemic. The workers in question were not *exactly* undocumented, but they had "phony-looking" I-9s (Skarda). This brings up the micropolitics of a little slip of paper. Individuals signing, forging, reading, glancing at, scrutinizing, providing, and demanding work papers are all little everyday, bureaucratic activities. And yet there is no way to dissociate the piece of paper from the political. The nation, the moment, politics, and documentation status are constructed through acts involving papers. It is the force of law, with an emphasis on the force, that wages war against those whose papers are not legitimate. In *Paper Machine*, Derrida writes:

> If we now fold ourselves back into 'our countries,' toward the relatively and provisionally stabilized context of the 'current' phase of the 'political' life of nation-states, the war against 'undocumented' or 'paperless' people testifies to this incorporation of the force of law, as noted above, in paper, in 'acts' of legalization, legitimation, accreditation, and regularization linked to the holding of 'papers': power accredited to deliver 'papers,' power and rights linked to holding certificates on official paper on one's person, close up to oneself (60).

Even, Derrida writes, when we advocate for undocumented workers, we have not worked to change the direction of the force of law, but to change the status of their documentation. We try to make workers *compliant* with the law, rather than making the law reflect the needs of employers and employees. He writes, "when we fight on behalf of 'paperless' people, when we support them today in their struggle, we still demand that they be issued with papers. We have to remain within this logic. What else could we do?" (60). He continues, "As with bank address details and as with names, 'home' presupposes 'papers.' The 'paperless' person is an outlaw, a nonsubject legally, a noncitizen or the citizen of a foreign country refused the right conferred, on paper, by a temporary or permanent visa, a rubber stamp" (60). But as Derrida suggests, it is possible to reconsider our concept of immigration so that an undocumented person is not the same as an outlaw or nonsubject. As evidence of this, the Associated Press revised its stylebook in 2013 to curtail the use of "illegal immigrant" because "'illegal' should describe only an action, such as living in or immigrating to a country illegally" and not a person (Colford). But Chipotle has to remain within the logic of a system that makes outlaws of the paperless. Regardless whether it overlooked

phony-looking papers, the incident illustrates how Chipotle must participate in a broken system. This is not a burrito issue or a Chipotle issue. It's a food system issue. It's an issue for the whole ecology.

A Cultural Biography of the Burrito

As *The Onion* article and the Burrito Bandito and the Frito Bandito and the bracero burritos and the Chipotle labor issues illustrate, we can build a mimetic strand that weaves together "real life" and parody in knots of controversy. To better visualize this strand and these knots, I created a map and timeline using TimeMapper. (See fig. 1.3.)

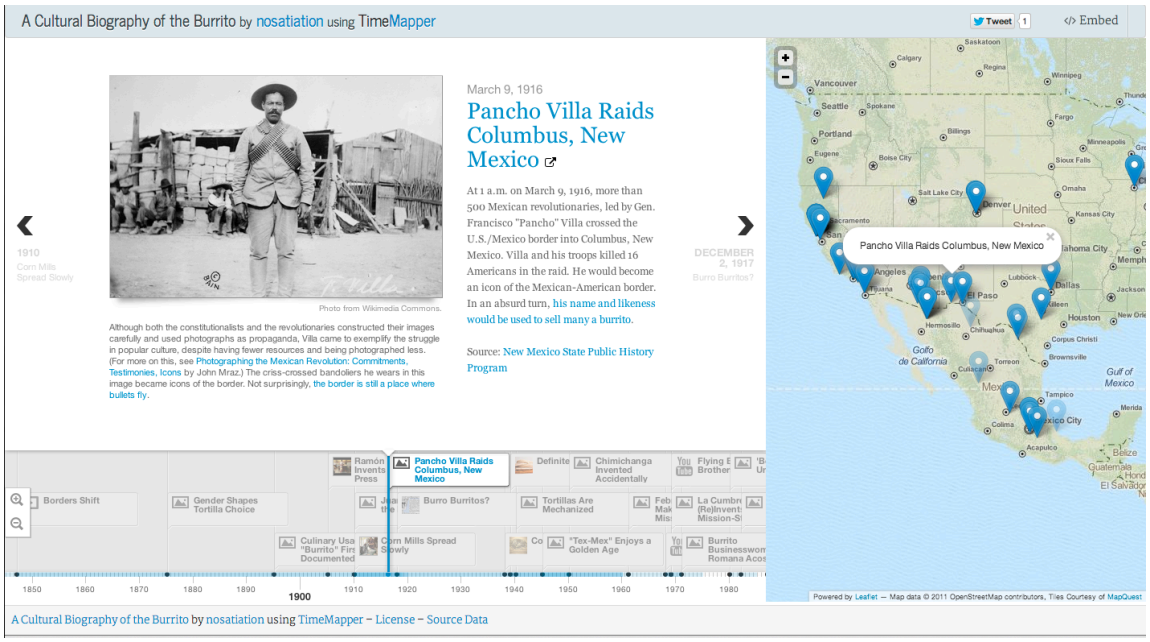

Fig. 1.3. A Cultural Biography of the Burrito TimeMap. Will Burdette; www.Flickr.com, 30 May 2014; Web; 30 May 2014.

In addition to banditos, braceros, and labor issues, here are a few more highlights from the timemap: Culinary use of term "burrito" was first documented in 1895 in central Mexico, not the borderlands. Originally, burritos were made with corn and/or flour tortillas. The

Mexican Revolution era, between 1910 and 1920, is more or less when the classic burrito, characterized by simple ingredients like beans and beef machaca, emerged. This partially explains the bandito iconography. The classic burrito was eclipsed by the Mission-style burrito that spread across the country in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

It is evident from the events in my timemap that people have strong feelings about the burrito (See No Satiation "A Cultural Biography of the Burrito," Burdette "A Cultural Biography of the Burrito.") These feelings are often associated with a place. *The Onion*, Frito-Lay, and the Burrito Bandito restaurant all want you feel amusement, even as they deal in borderland stereotypes. Perhaps feelings of civic pride are involved, as with Trillin's daughter. Jonathan Gold wants you to feel nostalgic for a classic burrito or a "portable meal from a tortilla, last night's beans and a spoonful of stew if there was one" ("What is a Burrito?). People such as food writer Diana Kennedy might want you to regard the burrito as an inferior, inauthentic hybrid and feel a sense of taste and sophistication as you opt instead for "authentic regional cuisines" of Mexico (xiii). Even at the upper echelons of food writing, where Gold and Kennedy sit, burrito rhetoric is a minefield of feelings, values, and word choice associated with places. I gloss this history of the burrito to entice you to visit the map itself at http://timemapper.okfnlabs.org/nosatiation/mapping-burritos.

A Cultural Biography of Things

The timemap is a demonstration of digital writing that builds on the work of Martin Heidegger, Jeff Miller, Jonathan Deutsch, Igor Kopytoff Daniel Waugh, who—when taken together—offer a methodology called a "cultural biography of things." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger explains that the "interpretation of the thingness of the thing, the thing

as bearer of its characteristic traits, despite its currency, is not as natural as it appears to be" (24). He writes, "What seems natural to us is probably just something familiar in a long tradition that has forgotten the unfamiliar source from which it arose. And yet this unfamiliar source once struck man as strange and caused him to think and wonder" (24). Miller and Deutsch note that Heidegger asked "What Is A Thing?" "in order to lay the groundwork for his explorations between the physical and the abstract." (179) Miller and Deutsch extend Heidegger's exploration to food. They also draw on Igor Kopytoff's "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." Kopytoff explains how "things" can lend some material context to the messiness of cultural exchange:

> Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. For example, in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects—as of alien ideas—is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way that they are culturally redefined and put to use. (67)

The burrito has been redefined in various ways; the differences between a commissary handing out burritos to braceros in the 1940s and an urbanite buying a Chipotle burrito in 2014 are huge. A biography of the burrito can point out those differences and lead to a nuanced understanding of cultural contact. Furthermore, it illustrates that the borderlands out of which the burrito emerges, are not static, pencil-thin lines on a map. They are are huge multidimensional spaces that change and overlap and advance and recede and clash. That is, they are dynamic scenes of rhetorical activity.

Taste, Terroir, and Networks

Socially constructed as they are, our feelings about food are shaped by the interplay of language, history, and place. More importantly, our social conventions and our laws are shaped by these feelings. The burrito's repeated association with "outlaws"—from the bandito to Chipotle employees with the phony looking I-9s—suggests either that the burrito truly is the result of borderland life where the law and outlaw collide, or that enough of us want to believe that myth that we perpetuate it again and again. This is, again, likely a matter of theatrical mimesis wherein the stories we tell one another about one another shape how we relate to one another in the world. These stories also shape our places. A hybrid food like the burrito is associated with border-crossing outlaws because we create and perpetuate myths about those who make and consume burritos. Pancho Villa was not an historically significant figure in San Francisco history, but his name and likeness appear at taquerias in The Mission where a bit of the border is recreated, stage-like, in terms of theatrical mimesis. And yet, mimesis and alterity play off one another. Mission taquerias—even Taqueria Pancho Villa—distinguished their burritos to such a degree that their distinct style has swept the country. Sometimes foods, and the material and rhetorical trappings around them, travel together and put down roots in different locales. Pancho Villa's effects were felt all the way up in San Francisco as troops left the Presidio to participate in the 1916-1917 Punitive Expedition in search of him (Thompson 599). The mission for which the San Francisco neighborhood and the burrito style are named are testament to the legacy of Spanish colonialism that brought the vital ingredients like the flour tortilla up the mission trail. The network from the borderlands to The Mission is so well-trod that the burrito has become associated with both ends of the trail and yet it morphs along the way. There is, in the words of Thomas Rickert, a "terroir" to food and drink, and this "terroir" is now, according to Jeff

Rice, "networked." Rice uses "terroir" to refer to an "aggregation of experiences, and emotions, and places" associated with food or drink that has a designation of place ("Interview"). Food grows out of, and picks up the taste of, places with particular affordances and constraints. This is why things like "appellation," the EU's "protected designation of origin," "protected geographical indication," and "traditional specialities guaranteed" exist. There are, for example, rules about what can be called Champagne, Dijon, or bourbon. But as Rice's "networked" modification of the concept alludes to, terroir does not stay in place. It moves across and through networks, bringing new tastes to places and remaking those places in the process. Chinatowns are another example of the interplay between place and taste, mimesis and alterity. You do not often see 1000-year-eggs in taquerias, and you do not often see huevos rancheros in Chinatown. Each place has its own look, feel, and taste. But Chinatown is not China and the place where the taquerias cluster is not Mexico. The taste, architecture, and language of China or Mexico are transplanted to new places and mimesis is a good word for the way in which new places are created in the image of the old. But at the same time, the clustering together of Chinese or Mexican culture in a new geographical location creates an alterity—complete with new borders and rules for policing them—in the new location. The history of the burrito as told through the timemap is the story of how tastes move through networks, creating pockets of mimesis here and alterity there, depending on your perspective.

Traditional But Not Stable

As the cultural biography of the burrito suggests, the thing we think of as a "burrito" is really just a word that we apply to various iterations of food that usually, but not

always, get wrapped in a flour tortilla. Despite not being a stable thing, burritos are still traditional. For example, Peter Fox, on his burrito quest for NPR and *The Washington Post* in the late '90s, found Poncho Durazo, an 80-year-old authority on Sonoran cooking who explained the Sonora tradition of machaca burritos. Fox writes, "Before refrigeration, he said, beef was preserved by drying it in thin slices. Machaca is made by later pounding and cooking the dried beef back to tenderness." But this history, this tradition, does not ever lead back to a moment of invention. At the end of his "cross-country quest for the origin of the burrito," he and his travel companions noticed that the closer they got to the "source" the more it seemed to recede:

> We were determined to trace its history through the people who know it best —the owners and operators of old burrito places. As we followed the historical trail, and got closer and closer to the source, the burritos became smaller and smaller, and our favorite ingredients disappeared one by one. When we finally found what we thought was the original burrito, it was very different from the burritos we knew and loved. The burrito's evolution seemed like a cross-generational version of the children's game of telephone, in which a message is passed through so many people that the message at the end is completely different from the original. (E01)

There is no authentic burrito because the burrito is not the result of an inspired, secretly transmitted recipe. The burrito is a messy, social, shape-shifting thing. Conversations around the burrito reflect that mess.

The "A" Word

Discussing origins and authenticity in hybrid foods requires a lot of nuance. In her article on the rhetoric of Mexican food titled "Authentic Or Not, It's Original," Meredith E. Abarca writes "the everyday non-critical use of the phrase 'authentic Mexican food' can manifest itself as a double-edged sword, by illustrating the danger of its ideological implications" (2). These dangers, Abarca points out, are Appadurai's idea of '"hijacking' an other's cultural production" (3) and fetishizing foreign foods. She writes, "My concern echoes Mary Douglas's suggestion that food can be a '"blinding fetish in our culture . . ." of which "our ignorance is explosively dangerous'" (quoted in Kane, 2002: 315)" (2). Just as the burrito is like a game of telephone, so is the way we talk about the burrito, as Abarca quoting Appadurai or Abarca quoting Kane quoting Douglas suggests. These things get repeated for a reason; the dangers of cultural hijacking or fetishizing a food are all too real, as the Frito/burrito bandito suggests. Abarca writes, "Those who award themselves the privilege to define authenticity in any ethnic food, whether they are cultural outsiders or insiders, can inflict wounds that either appropriate cultural and personal knowledge or essentialize it causing a stifling of creative growth" (2). Abarca's solution, then, is a rhetorical one. She shifts the conversation by substituting a different word and concept for "authentic:"

> I strongly feel that the word original diminishes the possibility for encompassing colonizing attitudes, and therefore for operating under stereotypes. A paradigm that addresses originality rather then the authenticity places the focus on newness. A definition of the word original suggest [sic] something that is 'an adoption to anything in relation to that which is an

> [earlier] production of it.' To speak of original rather than authentic, the production always belongs to the person who creates it. (19)

Both Fox's discussion of the origins of the burrito and Abarca's discussion of how we discuss origins in Mexican food point to a similar place. With burritos and burrito rhetorics, as Abarca puts it, "Yes, an earlier source is followed, but room for change exists. Alterations to cultural reproductions and creations of new productions do not render them less meaningful. Deviation to a degree from an earlier source allows room for modifications that expand cultural boundaries" (19). The burrito is the result of material and social processes that can be observed, repeated, adapted, and altered. In this way, the burrito is a matter of iteration.

Iterability and the Burrito

Derrida has explained writing and iterability, writing:

> [T]here is no such thing as a code—organon of iterability—which could be structurally secret. The possibility of repeating and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network [*une grille*] that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible user in general. ("Signature Event Context" 7)

The transmittable-ness and decipher-ability that Derrida writes about are similar to the qualities that Barthes indicates when he writes that food "transmits a situation." Not only is every mark repeatable, but it is this repeatability that makes the network a normalized, functional thing. Derrida writes, "This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal)

without which a mark could not even have a function called 'normal' ("Signature Event Context" 12). Seen from this perspective, the burrito can help explain iterability and iterability can help explain the burrito. As we look at the history of the burrito, we see all these reiterations of the burrito and we see the notion of a burrito does not merely change as it moves, but it is actually constituted by these iterations. As we search for an original, a source, a meaning of "burrito," it recedes. The burrito contains an internal alterity that undermines the very idea of fidelity. In *Planet Taco*, Pilcher writes:

> The burrito exemplifies this peculiar geography of global Mexican, eaten widely around the world, but virtually unknown in most of Mexico. Wrapped in a wheat flour tortilla, it is a distinctive product of the frontier, unlike the corn-based dishes popular in the rest of the country. The use of animal fat in making flour tortillas also sets them off from the vegetarian corn variety. While the wrapper is norteño, burrito fillings often are not; for example, the combination of beans and rice is more characteristic of the Caribbean than of northern Mexico.

The burrito is constituted by the tensions—corn v. flour, norteño v. interior Mexico, Mexico v. U.S., vegetarian v. omnivore, Mission style v. smothered—that constantly threaten to unwrap it, to burst it, to spring a leak in it. In the so-called beginning, in 1895 when Feliz Ramos I. Duarte documented the culinary usage of the term, it is so vague that it could refer to a taco, a taquito, an enchilada, etc. (98). Now it has proliferated to the extent that "burrito" refers to many different dishes, some plated and others portable. The cultural biography of the burrito illustrates that it cannot be summed up or written off as "Tex-Mex" or "Cal-Mex" or Sonoran or "authentic" or "inauthentic" or "original" or

"unoriginal." It cannot be summed up at all. It cannot even be contained in any history or cultural biography or any other print-based concept. This is why my timemap of the cultural biography of the burrito is both useful and insufficient. The timemap is a good tool for rhetorical inquiry because it builds on familiar paper notions of maps and timelines and borders. It allows us to see how the burrito changes as it moves across geographical networks. However, the maps themselves, and the borders and countries represented on them, are also networks of power and control. Timelines reify histories and maps reify nations. This is their power. But they are always shifting texts. This is why the "cultural biography of things" approach, and my timemap in particular, will always be incomplete. We must always keep inquiring.

A Pedagogy for Cultural Biographies of Things

Understanding objects via iterability suggests some pedagogical uses of cultural biographies of things. As I model it here and in the timemap, my approach demonstrates what Jenny Rice calls "the act of inquiry," which, she suggests, can be its own telos: "the telos of network tracing and rhetorical inquiry is located within the process itself. Inquiry is the rhetorical goal" (173). If we emphasize inquiry, it shifts our understanding of kairos. Kairos has been tricky to teach. Thomas Rickert writes that James L. Kinneavy's essay "Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric" "initiated a substantial amount of work in the years that have followed" but that "this growing body of work has yet to dispel a particular difficulty with the concept" (74). The difficulty is that "kairos resists formalization and mastery." Pedagogical problems result from this resistance. Rickert writes, "If rhetoric is to cast itself as a teachable subject, then some formalization should be possible, and if not,

what then? How to teach the unexpected?" (74-5). Muckelbauer asks a similar question in *The Future of Invention*: "Even if kairos provides an adequate description of how actual situatedness happens (and its intimate connection to invention), can it be taught?" Rickert advocates a "Vitanzan kairos" in which "'it' is always happening, not as an opportune moment on which we could capitalize (with the full economic valuation that implies), but as something happening now, to us, within the turbulence and play of forces" (89). If kairos is not an opportune moment, but rather always happening around and to us, then inquiry becomes a way of attuning ourselves to that happening. This attunement, Muckelbauer notes, should not be confused with harmony or wholeness. It is not the same thing as quasi-spiritual notions like "being at one with the world." Muckelbauer writes:

> Importantly, this attunement or harmony need not be subordinated to some sense of organic unity ... The resonance evoked through a kairotic connection is not the completion of some abstract and natural wholeness, but the very distribution of difference itself, the actualization of a nonindividual response through individuation. In other words, far from causing unity, kairos effects a dissolution through the connecting of singular (nonindividual) rhythms. As a result, while it makes sense to think of this responsiveness in terms of harmony and rhythm, we must be careful to recognize that such resonance can sound to us like discord or arrhythmia.

From this perspective, Muckelbauer advocates a "singular and situated responsiveness" that is "best thought as a kind of ontological attunement or rhythmicity, a being 'in synch' from which more recognizable difference emerges." That is, simply by attuning oneself to a situation and responding, rhetors participate in kairotic moments. Combined, this

understanding of kairos and rhetorical inquiry gives rhetors permission to jump in anywhere and start examining the iterations and reiterations of a thing, to follow the rhythm, harmony, and discord it participates in. The responses that come from this attunement will be singular because of the way they are situated. And, as Muckelbauer notes, "singular situatedness is always being taught." Attuning to the way a thing repeats itself (mimesis) and responding to that repetition is pedagogical. If teaching and learning is already happening, then, we might as well lean into the inquiry. As Muckelbauer writes, "the pedagogical provocation of situated response fittingly begins with a single, unambiguous piece of practical teaching advice: experiment (because you already are)!"

Part II: Chipotlization: Mimesis, Affect, and Delivery

Introducing Farmed and Dangerous

Had I been attuned to the burrito in 2011, I might have keyed in on Chipotle's immigration problem as the most interesting event for rhetorical analysis. But at the time of this writing in 2014 Chipotle was making their biggest headlines with *Farmed and Dangerous*, a TV series distributed on Hulu starring *Twin Peaks* star Ray Wise. That a famous actor from a cult TV show would appear in branded content on an online distribution network to sell burritos struck me as significant for several reasons. The whole thing smacked of mere public relations rather than the more rhetorically significant and complex immigration controversy, but bread and circuses are every bit as rhetorical as the "serious" issues they detract from. Furthermore, the production values suggest there is a lot of money at stake. Hulu as the delivery mechanism suggests a shift in the control of media networks and the way we consume video content. And selling burritos without ever mentioning burritos and only once mentioning the name of the brand is intriguing. Using the timemap as an aid to inquiry helped to attune myself to new, interesting happenings in the world of burrito rhetorics. I used the timemap project to contextualize my exploration of Chipotle's rhetoric, and it helped me understand the significance of the company's strategy. As Kopytoff might suggest, it is not significant that Chipotle sells burritos, but how they culturally redefine them is significant. Chipotle's big redefinition consists of transforming burritos from utilitarian meals (or, worse, meals of shame) into commodified comfort food. In the context of burrito history, it is significant that Chipotle turns away from notions of authenticity. They

eschew braceros and bandito imagery, opting instead for historically inaccurate (but cool looking) Mayan-influenced imagery. They also stay away from primary colors and marketing directly toward children. The look and feel of Chipotle's restaurants is part of Chipotle's anti-fast food vibe, which creates tension as they strive toward systematic expansion. To better understand the history of this expansion tension, we have to address the McDonald's issue.

The McDonald's Issue

Fast casual dining emerged in the early '90s and Chipotle was on the vanguard. Chipotle did not invent the line system where people participate in the creation of their meals by telling cooks what they want, but they did popularize it. The company was literally McDonaldized in 1998. By expanding Chipotle from 16 locations to more than 500 locations, McDonald's made $1.5 billion when it sold the company in 2006. Even before that, by the early aughts, Chipotle had become consciously aware of how its relationship with fast food was changing customer perceptions. Using creative analogies, they rhetorically distanced themselves from traditional fast food, even as McDonald's owned and structured them. Chipotle's Executive Director of Marketing Jim Adams said:

> You can look at McDonald's one way—in this regard they've really been venture capitalists behind Chipotle's growth...So their influence has been more financial, but also we've been able to utilize some of the things that they do very well. Like using their distribution system. And it's enabled us to go to suppliers like Niman Ranch and say, 'We want to get involved with you.' (Burdette "The New Fast Food" 28)

If Adam's talk sounds very Web 2.0, it is. The idea for Chipotle was born in the Mission District in San Francisco in 1993 and the company has technologized many aspects of the burrito. In this way, Chipotle is a Bay Area startup, bought out by a giant corporation, and spun off. It grew into the Apple of fast-casual dining (Yglesias). This corporate ethos is clearly part of a marketing strategy (everything is with Chipotle), but its marketing strategy indicates something about American culture at present. Food corporations exert an enormous amount of influence on the technologization of societies. How they operate rhetorically has a significance that goes beyond food. This is why we have the concept of McDonaldization.

McDonaldization

George Ritzer coined the term "McDonaldization" in 1996 to explain how the company's model for offering "consumers, workers, and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control" spreads across the planet (12). Several aspects of McDonalization are explicitly, conventionally rhetorical. Take, for instance, advertising, a common target of rhetorical analysis since the classical rhetoric revival of the 1960s. It is not hard to understand and analyze the company's tactics through rhetorical concepts. For example, in "The Rhetoric of McDonaldization," John Caputo analyzes a McDonald's commercial in which a dad takes his daughter to McDonald's and the zoo. One can imagine doing such analysis on any number of McDonald's ads. Given their ubiquity, McDonald's ads were easily framed and analyzed as rhetorical artifacts in the '90s when Caputo was writing. But the point of Caputo's analyses—that, for example, the rhetoric of McDonaldization extends beyond words—is still somewhat novel. Caputo writes:

> [T]he signs and symbols of this advertisement consist of…the nonverbal expressions on the faces of the three characters, the dress of the characters, the physical contact, the car, the outdoor activity, the McDonald's food, the balloons, the grainy soft picture, the soft music and the absence of dialogue. The signs intimate affluence, independence, joy, familial relations, and leisure. (45-6)

McDonald's does not clearly state "buying McDonald's will signal to the world that you and your family are wealthy, carefree, and happy." Stating it clearly would open the message to scrutiny. Instead, they suggest it with all the non-verbal force they can muster. They write the scene and set the stage to convey their message. What we can take away from analyses like Caputo's is that the extension of the rhetorical sphere beyond the verbal to the entire constructed environment is part of the process of McDonaldization. Now, just as people refer to "McDonaldization," we can refer to "Chipotlization," or a system of reiteratable codes that—like the art on their walls—can be reproduced and disseminated. Whether we are talking about the rhetoric of McDonaldization or Chipotlization, we must consider all the verbal and nonverbal means of persuasion. Chipotlization is mimesis on the scale of the corporation. We can see how mimesis works at this level by breaking down the system of reiterable codes that the company uses to encourage consumers to mimetically repeat their purchasing behavior. Chipotle has built the stage and semi-scripted the performance. The consumers are all extras in its performance. To build and set the stage and script the performance, the company relies on the structure of the fast casual concept itself, real estate and colocation, corporate social responsibility campaigns (CSR), and branded content. I'll

briefly address the first two and then focus the remainder of this work on Chipotle's CSR and branded content.

The Rhetoric of Fast-Casual Dining

The fast-causal restaurant itself is a form of persuasion insofar as its implementation requires rhetorical strategizing as it expands and scales. Your experience will be the same wherever the Chipotle you step into is located, and this is strategic. You are shunted into a line. Maybe you bob your head to the music, a carefully curated mix of tunes designed by Chipotle company DJ Chris Golub to make you move faster or slower, depending on the time of day (Suddath). Maybe your cooks are moving with the music, too, as you come face to face with them to design your meal. There is a subtle, possibly non-verbal, non-symbolic kind of rhetoricity going on here. In *Inessential Solidarity*, Diane Davis writes of the "affirmation of a 'rhetorical power'...that is not the effect of representation (conscious or unconscious)" (2). She continues:

> As anyone who has irrepressibly tapped her foot to an unfamiliar tune will acknowledge, 'persuasion' frequently succeeds without presenting itself to cognitive scrutiny. The fact that this extra symbolic rhetoricity remains irreducible to epistemological frame-ups makes it no less powerful, no less fundamental, no less significant to rhetorical studies. (2)

Even though the music at Chipotle is "extra symbolic" and does not involve direct verbal representation, we must still conclude that it is persuasive. After all, Chipotle hired Golub to craft sonic ambience for the chain. Golub says, "We don't program for certain markets; we program based off of what we feel works...[s]o when you have a burrito in Iowa, or Paris,

France, or London, England, or Canada, you're hearing the same program and the same vibe" (Utterback). The vibe created by fast-casual restaurant chains falls under the heading of what Rickert calls "ambient rhetoric." In *Ambient Rhetoric* he "explores...how sonic phenomena exemplify a form of ambient rhetoric that evokes feeling, meaning, connection, community, and a sense of place—which is to say, nonsemiotic elements of design and rhetoric" (144). Chipotle's music is a perfect example of such sonic phenomena designed to evoke a sense of place. This semi-scripted, choreographed experience is different than ordering an Extra Value Meal at the drive through at McDonalds. The result is the same—a quick lunch on the go—but the vibe is different. When restauranteurs talk about their restaurants as "concepts" they use the word in a sense that is specific to their industry, but we might compare restaurant concepts to rhetorical or literary genres. The music is just one small part (along with the decor and the price point and the menu items) of the overall crafting of a restaurant's concept.

The Rhetoric of Warhol-esque Decor

For another example of how the fast causal restaurant format operates rhetorically, we might also look at the uniform and ubiquitous Mayan-esque sculptures adorning the walls of every Chipotle. They are the work of Colorado artist Bruce Gueswel. Gueswel has some credibility. His non-Chipotle work sells for as much as $30,000 per piece (Dunn). It does not eliminate controversy, but the turn away from the kitschy bandito imagery signals a big shift. This is where rhetorical inquiry is vital. To understand the rhetorical significance of Gueswel's work, you have to know some food history. You have to know that burrito was not possible until long after the fall of the Mayan civilization. The "burrito" did not emerge

until after the Spanish imported wheat flour, mestizos fused it with the indigenous tortilla technique, and Ramos codified the 1895 food-oriented usage of the term. The Pancho Villa-esque bandito imagery is actually more historically accurate than Chipotle's decor. Attaching neo-Mayan iconography to the burrito, then, can be read as an attempt to reach back further in the past, not for the sake of historical accuracy but to construct the sort of venerability that comes from referencing ancient civilizations. We see this kind of move again and again in Chipotle's rhetoric. Even as they Chipotlize everything in their path, they try to maintain a whiff of authenticity. And yet, even as they point to the distant past, Gueswel's pieces are more novel than bandito caricatures. His need to scale his operations for the ever-expanding chain gives his work a Warhol-esque quality. It can be at once reproduced for a mass market while retaining an aura of uniqueness when read against previous burrito imagery. If we cannot call Chipotle's sculptures symbols of "progress," perhaps we can understand them as emblems of Chipotle's rhetorical strategy. Chipotle constantly invents ways to negotiate the tension that comes from appropriating culture, maintaing a vibe that does not smack of fast food, and systematizing expansion. Gueswel's art addresses the appropriation of culture by reaching way far back for historical inspiration, reaching into the not-so-distant past for a combination of natural and man-made materials, and to the present for the notion of abstracting and remixing the components to achieve a scalable, replicable design that retains a distinctive look. If Chipotlization is the name we give to mimesis on the corporate scale, then we can zoom in on artifacts like the art and chairs to see how mimesis scales down. The pieces encapsulate the interplay of mimesis and alterity. In their construction, they are necessarily copies, but their distinctive look comes from the appropriation of the culture of

the Mayan other. And yet by remixing and repeating the appropriation again and again and again across the globe, Chipotle successfully claims the style regardless of its derivation.

The Persuasion of Portals

Zooming out from the implementation of the restaurant concept to the street level, we might also consider how Chipotle uses colocation and real estate to persuade. You might notice, for example, that Chipotle restaurants are always nestled among other corporate chains. They colocate so they can get what Richard Florida calls "spillover" (189), or traffic from people who have to run errands or are pulled away from neighboring Qdoba or Baja Fresh. There is a convenience factor here, but there is also something rhetorical about the corporate ethos that is created through the strength in numbers that comes from colocation. When we travel, my wife and I have taken to calling these agglomerations of chains "portals," because you can go into a Target or Walmart or Chipotle or Starbucks in any city and forget for a moment that you are in a foreign city. You can, in a sense, travel back home for a moment, to grab something you forgot, or get a coffee or burrito that is totally consistent. Then you can re-emerge in a foreign city. There is a persuasiveness to these portals. They beckon you to come in because they know you know they will have what you are looking for, or at least what you are willing to settle for. In "The Rhetoric of McDonaldization," Caputo writes about the disorienting lack of portals he found while on a research trip in Kent, England. Hungry and tired from the journey, he and his family found shopping in a foreign market challenging:

> With a tiny baby and two small toddlers we went from aisle to aisle, and after 20 minutes or so we had only located about three or four products to

> purchase. Nothing seemed to be what we were looking for. We couldn't find milk, diapers, napkins, or most other products we thought would be crucial. Finally, in desperation my wife said we better go back over to the canteen and eat before we all passed out. (41)

In the canteen, they had a similar experience with a hamburger that did not resemble what they were used to back home. Caputo eventually learned the patois that allowed him to order a familiar burger: "beef burger on a bap with salad, and a portion of chips with a sachet of ketchup" (41). Getting what he wanted required him to learn a new language as he navigated a new space. Contrast this with Jenny Rice's similar story of taking a road trip with her family and forgetting her infant's box of supplies—bottles, diapers, wipes, etc. It was no big deal; they knew they would be saved by a portal.

> [W]e both knew that the missing box was not really a serious problem. All we had to do is keep our eyes open for what we inevitably knew we would encounter. Before too long there would be a Walmart, a Target, a Walgreens, a Costco, or some other big box chain store. Its signage would almost certainly be visible from the highway, and we trusted that we would be able to exit from the highway and easily make our way into the parking lot. The store would likely be an anchor in a strip of other stores. Before we even spotted any stores, I began thinking about other possibilities. 'As long as we're going to stop, let's see if there's a Starbucks or a Panera so we can get some coffee' (*Distant Publics*).

They found their portal and "[t]here was even a Starbucks," writes Rice. "We did not owe this good fortune to any knowledge of the local physical landscape, but to a contemporary

geography of ubiquitous development. We navigated commercial space, not geographical space" (*Distant Publics*). How did they navigate that commercial space? How did they know there would be a Starbucks and a Walmart in the same parking lot? Through the conventions of co-location. They have been, as we all have been, educated in the ways of corporate portals.

The Combinatory Logic of HyperReality

There is an emergent logic to the ways cities develop (see Johnson *Emergence*, Jacobs *Death and Life*, Florida *Rise of the Creative Class*), but there is also a top-down strategic logic to portals within (or more often, ringing) cities. Chipotle, for example, has very specific criteria for what makes a good location for them. According to their website, Chipotle wants "[u]rban and suburban" locations "with strong residential and daytime population" ("Real Estate Development"). They are looking for what they call "generators" which are densities of pedestrians in university, recreation residential, office, retail, and hospital areas. These may seem more like business and/or real estate concerns than rhetorical concerns, but consider how the company looks for locations that will communicate their brand. They are looking for prominent locations including "urban storefronts, shopping center end-caps and pads, freestanding buildings." They want "25 feet minimum frontage," and "excellent visibility and access" so that they can display "Chipotle standard storefront design and signage." Chipotle does not want to be a hole-in-the-wall tucked away in a back alleyway. If you can spot Chipotle signage on the way home from your school, work, or on your evening run, it is not a coincidence. This is rhetorically strategic. Chipotle has customized software that employs complex data blending to help them strategically find and acquire real estate that fits their

branding specifications. ("Alteryx Helps Leading Restaurant Chain"). Like the green Starbucks siren, Chipotle signage is beckoning you. Branded signage becomes no different than other signage in a city, instructing travelers to navigate Rice's "commercial space" and Umberto Eco's "secondary America." This kind of replication of commercial space brings us into the realm of the hyperreal. If theatrical mimesis is the play of life's repetitions, then hyperreality is its stage, and real estate its business model. "Selling real estate, after all, is a hyperreal endeavor," Eric Detweiler notes in his discussion of the the Disney Corporation's planned community, Celebration (166). Baudrillard defines the hyperreal, which is the new real, as something replicated—as with Chipotle's data blending real estate acquisition software—indefinitely:

> The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control—and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these. It no longer needs to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational. In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere. (2)

Combinatory logic is everywhere in Chipotleland, from the modular hotel pans in the prep tables in the burrito line to the music mix of the DJ. There is something appealing about the combinatory logic of our current cultural moment. It feels liberating to be able to choose your own ingredients. We can remix Baudrillard to say that the combinatory Chipotle burrito "no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance." That is, Chipotle's burritos are neither akin to Gold's ideal cowboy burritos, nor the negative burritos passed

out to braceros. All customers can make their burritos into whatever they want, even salads, bowls, and not burritos. All of this seems good. But the loss, as Baudrillard sees it, is in the soulless operational-only result of combinatory models. The business model behind the Chipotle assembly line that you are shunted into is, at its core, that of a soulless, money-grubbing burrito factory. No "imaginary of representation" (Baudrillard 2) envelops the cold pragmatic logic of capitalism. To compensate for this loss of soul, companies reinvent the imaginary to sell happy meals. This is the secondary America Eco is writing about in *Travels in Hyperreality*:

> This is the America of Linus, for whom happiness must assume the form of a warm puppy or security blanket, the America of Schroeder, who brings Beethoven to life not so much through a simplified score played on a toy piano as through the realistic bust in marble (or rubber). Where Good, Art, Fairytale, and History, unable to become flesh, must at least become Plastic" (57).

Whether it is a warm puppy, a security blanket, or a happy meal, secondary America entices you with feelings of familiarity and security. Of course, Eco is writing about hyperreality in the time of McDonaldization and we are in the age of Chipotlization. But whether we are talking about brightly colored plastic McDonald's happy meal toys or the wood and metal chairs and sculptures of Gueswel, the strategic replication of both spaces and synthetic flair is unchanged. This strategic replication of spaces to make them look and feel a certain way, is wrapped up with certain values. Eco writes, "The ideology of this America wants to establish reassurance through Imitation" (57). Reassurance through imitation is Plastic America's modus operandi. Theatrical mimesis can, again, be instructive here. Potolsky

writes that "none of the material things that contribute to theatrical mimesis—stage backdrop, props, actors, audience, texts—is inherently mimetic" (75). Rather, he writes "They only become so in and through a given production and by virtue of the conventional beliefs and practices of participants on stage and in the audience" (75). Convention and practice turn the stage into a mimetic environment. In the same way, convention and practice turn McDonald's and Chipotle into stages. Building the stage set is part and parcel of McDonaldization; McDonaldization sets the stage for mimetic repetition by building identical structures in which participants can rehearse any time of day, in any part of the world, any number of times, for any number of reasons. Are the kids sad? Get them a happy meal. Are you in a hurry? Hit the drive through. Are the kids full of sugary pop? Let them run it out in the Playland. Got some time between meals? Have a snack. McDonaldization has a script for every occasion and they have used these scripts to create conventional practices in secondary America. Like Caputo and Rice, we all travel through this secondary America. When we pull back the veil, we do not find a "primary" America. We may be pragmatically looking for portals on road trips to reassure us or we may just be worn down from a search for "authenticity" and ever-receding origins. We may, as Jenny Rice writes in "(Un)Loveable Food" be exercising our "lateral agency" when we take our "anonymous place in line" (45), when we settle for a corporate burrito instead of a so-called authentic taco topped with craft (not Kraft) cheese and artisanal pickled onions. But, really, a corporate burrito is arguably more in line with the burrito's history than some artisanal burrito. The burrito has always been a cheap utility food fed to the masses. The burrito has always been fast food. That's why Chipotle puts its stores across from "generators" like colleges. You eat it because it is there. The persuasion happens because the location was strategically

predetermined with the help of software and data blending. If that makes you feel empty, well, hyperreality has a distraction—like a toy in a happy meal—for that, too.

Branded Content as The New Happy Meal

Branded content is the new happy meal. It is tempting to write off branded content as just another form of commercial. Unlike fast food chains, Chipotle has mostly eschewed TV (and other traditional) advertising, and has built the lack of advertising into its business model. In 2011, it spent just shy of $6 million on advertising. By comparison, Arby's spends $100 million a year and McDonald's spends $650 million (Edwards). Instead, they turn to branded content as part of an overall marketing strategy to differentiate themselves from their fast food parents. Regardless whether the content is good, they are able to generate buzz simply through novelty and association. Branded content is not new. It harkens back to the early days of TV when advertisers created content. In *The New Yorker*, Elizabeth Weiss writes about branded content like "Kraft Television Theatre" "The Voice of Firestone," "The Colgate Comedy Hour," and "Texaco Star Theatre." She writes, "Like most early TV, 'Kraft Television Theatre' was made on the advertiser-producer model, adapted from radio. Networks sold the airtime, but advertising agencies—in this case, J. Walter Thompson—produced the content on behalf of their clients." While it is not new, branded content has seen a bit of a resurgence in the last decade. Lots of tastemakers are doing it. Wes Anderson did it for Prada. Dan Harmon did it for Subway in "Community." Michele Gondry did it for HP. Venerable sketch comedy juggernaut Second City has done it for Kraft, McDonalds, ConAgra, and SaraLee. This is the direction in which Chipotlization extends McDonaldization. Instead of creating literal playgrounds as McDonald's did, Chipotle

creates virtual playgrounds, attaching a vast network of celebrity to the projects, to make people feel good about their brand. Virtual or physical, these affective rhetorical strategies are part of what Ritzer calls "enchantment":

> McDonaldization tends to bring with it disenchantment, or a loss of magic and mystery. Disenchanted structures are unlikely to attract consumers. In response to this problem, the new means of consumption have, at least to some degree, been reenchanted, incorporating ever-more spectacular features to draw in consumers seeking euphoria in a world lacking in emotion. This is the characteristic that associates the new means of consumption with postmodernism. (200-1)

In an effort to enchant its customers, Chipotle has created non-traditional marketing that includes the Cultivate festival, animated Web videos with covers of popular songs by Fiona Apple and Willie Nelson, video games for Apple's iOS, and the miniseries *Farmed and Dangerous*. As is noted in the video accompaniment to this work "Chipotle Branded Content Strategy Review," Chipotle's enchantment campaign is designed to make customers feel things, but the company also embeds strategic messages in the content. In one particularly clever scene, Max (Paul James) asks PR flack Buck Marshall (Ray Wise), "Doesn't McDonald's own Chipotle?" to which Marshall responds "No, McDonald's doesn't own Chipotle. Just a rumor I started. It's still got legs" (qtd. in No Satiation "Chipotle Branded Content Strategy Review"). Chipotle's whole marketing strategy can be read through this moment: a movie star in a highly produced video plays an evil corporate PR guy who claims he started "a rumor" that is, in reality, partially true.

The Affective Rhetoric of Corporate Social Responsibility

The affective dimension of Chipotle's marketing is even more evident in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaign. Much of the CSR campaign is more verbal than branded content, interior design, and curated music, but the lines between the Corporate Social Responsibility campaign their branded content initiatives are intentionally fuzzy. That is, the CSR purports to be based in reality, not fiction. However, on its website, Chipotle lists "Back to the Start,"—the cute, animated video with Willie Nelson's stirring rendition of Coldplay's "The Scientist"—under its "Food With Integrity" campaign ("Chipotle's Videos"). (For an explanation of the way Chipotle taps into the affective dimension, excerpts and behind the scenes footage from "Back to the Start," see the YouTube video "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review.") The page "Back to the Start—Behind the Scenes" and the accompanying video are also listed under FWI and links to Chipotle's Cultivate Foundation, which, according to their homepage, strives to "help fund initiatives that support sustainable agriculture, family farming, and culinary education." The film credits on the "Back to the Start—Behind the Scenes" page are particularly telling in the way that they reflect the intermingling of art, advertising, commerce, and philanthropy. In these credits, Chipotle is listed as the client *and* as the agency, along with CAA. The production company is Nexus Productions, which directed both a Grammy nominated video for Scottish indie rock band Franz Ferdinand and ads for Honda. Nexus won the first Cannes Grand Prix for branded content for "Back to the Start." In *Adverting Age*, Cannes Jury President Avi Savar said, "It wasn't the most talked-about 99-cent burrito...It was about an emotional connection with an audience" (Wentz). This is precisely how emotional connections and affective networks are formed. Chipotle created a

dream team of sorts to make a video that would go with with its "Food With Integrity" campaign. In just a few clicks, you get from FWI to Willie Nelson and Coldplay to The Cultivate Foundation. This not is a series of random internet links. These paths were established to encourage customers to move from food to commerce to feeling to philanthropy and back again and again. As is noted in the video accompaniment to this work "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review," the CSR campaign uses all kinds of non-verbal rhetoric for affective persuasion (No Satiation "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review"). In a Case Study of Chipotle Mexican Grill's "Food with Integrity" program in the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, Matthew Ragas and Marilyn Roberts analyzed Chipotle's CSR campaign. They interviewed Jim Adams, who said that the company promotes its "Food With Integrity" campaign to help customers "deepen their emotional connection with Chipotle" (272). At the top of their "Food With Integrity" page on their website, Chipotle links to a *Nightline* segment in which Ells talks about where their food comes from. The sense of place Chipotle constructs in videos like these is linked (associatively) to notions of integrity. Even when talking about food costs, it comes back around to affect. Ells says, "Chipotle has higher food costs than our competitors....but we have a business model that allows us to invest in higher quality food. And it's great because obviously this higher quality food tastes better which brings people back and it forms a deep bond with the customer" (qtd. in No Satiation "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review"). Whether it is a "deep emotional connection" or a "deep bond," Chipotle executives stick to the talking points memo. "Food With Integrity" is about creating a sense of depth and trust that is the foundation of its corporate ethos. It is this corporate ethos, this manufactured depth and trust, that allows customers to be

persuaded by emotional appeals. Whatever your persuasion, as long as you do not mind the higher price point, Chipotle will add feelings to your order. It may be empathy for people, nostalgia for an agrarian past, a desire to help the environment, or respect for animals.

Chipotle's Use of Online Video

As the videos I've been mentioning illustrate, Chipotle uses online delivery systems as part of its CSR campaign to evoke these feelings. They make extensive use of YouTube videos for emotional appeals about people, animals, and the environment. The CSR page says: "People are people, too." They tout their work with International Rescue Committee, which helps refugees get jobs ("IRC Refugee Clients"). With a link to their careers page from their CSR page, they claim to provide their own people with opportunities for advancement. On the careers page, we see three more videos like "A Day in the Life—Working at Chipotle," with upbeat music, closeups of fresh food, happy employees and iconic branding ("Start Your Career Rolling"). Arguably, the CSR campaign is made up of appeals not only to customers, but also to potential labor. In "Cultivating Future Leaders" Monty Moran, Chipotle's Co-CEO, says: "When a manager cares about each and every person on their team, when a manager believes in each and every person on their team, and wants nothing more than to make those people successful, those people feel it. And when those people feel it, they become committed. They become empowered" (qtd. in No Satiation "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review"). The link of feeling to commitment is not incidental. This is a thread that runs throughout Chipotle's CSR media. Get people to feel and you can better shape their actions by getting them to commit to your brand. Most of these people-oriented messages are in the "careers" section of the website linked to from the

CSR section, but not part of it. They make emotional appeals about animals, too. Ells says, "You can't breathe in a confinement operation. The odor is horrific and you can see the terror in the pig's eyes and they scurry away from you." The video cuts to clips of pigs climbing on top of each other in a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) (qtd. in No Satiation "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review"). We see this same type of appeal in another FWI video, "Paul Willis Story." The video starts out with white words on a black background:

> In the U.S. 90% of pigs are raised in confinement. Forced to live their entire lives indoors, most under brutal conditions. Crowded together amidst their own waste with no access to sunlight or pasture. But it doesn't need to be this way. Chipotle buys 100% of their pork from farmers like Paul Willis. This is his story.

The black screen fades into an open farm vista in Iowa that contrasts greatly with words like "confinement," "indoors," "brutal conditions," and "crowded together." Viewers see blue skies, red barns, and ponds. They see sunsets, green tractors, and windmills. And they see pigs scampering around. The video cuts to a small-town-USA street with people on bikes, American flags, a post office, and farm trucks passing one another on the road. Clad in denim overalls, Willis starts to tell his story, saying "I grew up in this area, and one of my main jobs as a boy was to take my bicycle, ride out to the hog field and check the pigs" (Chipotle Mexican Grill "Paul Willis Story"). With his ethos established, he starts talking about his ideals as soft guitar and synthesizer music plays in the background. He says "On my farm, we never allow anybody to hit a pig or anything like that. So they are not afraid and they're not stressed. If they are frightened...you can take a great animal and

produce really bad meat..." (Chipotle Mexican Grill "Paul Willis Story"). Willis states a connection that Chipotle wants customers to make: the taste of the food, the treatment of the animals, and the stewardship of the land all make their product better (and worth paying more for). While you would expect "Paul Willis Story" to be about Paul Willis, it is actually not so much about the farmer as it is about branding every aspect of the Chipotle network. This ecological perspective comes through even more strongly in another video, "Tall Grass Prairie." In this video, Willis calls the prairie "one of the most productive systems on earth." We see similar vistas of prairies and blue skies. He says "All of these species working together are more productive than any monoculture" (Chipotle Mexican Grill "Tall Grass Prairie"). Diversity, reconstruction and restoration of land, locavore sentiments, and an attachment to an ancient past are all expressed in the video. Willis says, "A good native prairie will have over 200 different species. And so in our reconstructed and restored prairie...I've tried to be as true as possible...this is the stuff that has been growing here for the last ten thousand years" (Chipotle Mexican Grill "Tall Grass Prairie"). It sounds good, but if you start to scratch the surface of what Willis is saying, words like "reconstructed and restored" and "true" and "monoculture" jump out as having been glossed. Just what state, what era, are we trying to restore the land to? If we are reconstructing something that has already been constructed, that suggests we are not going back to a pre-agrarian age, but back to the beginning of agriculture. Was agriculture back then efficient enough to feed our current population? Does monoculture really mean what we think it does here? Is monoculture really bad in terms of its benefits to the food supply (increased efficiency) and the farmer (money)? These are not merely rhetorical questions. They are meant to uncover the not-so-hidden fiction that Chipotle is promoting: that we could somehow go "back to

the start" and have a do-over without Big Ag, without McDonald's, and without ruining the environment. Like the quest for an authentic burrito, the "Back to the Start" message is the start of an enchanting wild goose chase.

Selling Affect

It is no surprise that Chipotle's branded content and other kinds of corporate and political rhetoric draw on affect to persuade. But novel is the extent to which they understand and negotiate the affective dimension of capitalism. Chipotle does not assign specific emotions to its campaigns, opting instead to range free across the affective landscape, pushing whatever emotional buttons it can. The distinction between affect and emotions is significant here. In *Parables for the Virtual,* Brian Massumi differentiates between affect and emotions. If emotions are perceived "subjective content" or "the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal" (28) or, as I might oversimplify it, "articulated feelings" then the affective dimension is the condition of unarticulated feelings out of which emotions and other activities emerge. Marketers can operate in this dimension without zeroing in on, crafting or even caring about which specific emotions its audience feels. As Massumi notes, researchers have found that the particular type of emotion (happy, sad, nostalgic) is not as important for remembering a TV spot as a the intensity of the emotion produced (23-5). Marketers, politicians, and other rhetors, then, do not have to be precise in their pathos-based appeals. They can transform their audience into customers by simply making them feel. In Massumi's explanation, affect is built into capitalism in a fundamental way:

> The ability of affect to produce an economic effect more swiftly and surely than economics itself means that affect is itself a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late-capitalist system, as infrastructural as a factory. Actually, it is beyond infrastructural, it is everywhere, in effect. Its ability to come second-hand, to switch domains and produce effects across them all, gives it a metafactorial ubiquity. It is beyond infrastructural. It is transversal. (45)

In capitalism, affect is the pre-condition for infrastructural development. Infrastructure is built to harness affect and, if not convert it into specific emotional states in customers, at least convert it into dollars. In Massumi's view, capitalism sells affect. Chipotle sells affect.

Chipotle as a Transmittable Network

My intent here is not to critique Chipotle. The world they have created is fun to unwrap. And it is great marketing. But it is generic, as in genre. The structure of the restaurants, where they are located, the branded content, and the CSR are clearly part of a rhetorical strategy. This strategy is fueled by a network of relationships of telegenic celebrities that makes their brand desirable by association. Emotional appeals are the juice that courses through the network and these emotional appeals are largely (but by no means exclusively) delivered via online video. And it all works. Chipotle's branding is effective because of the affordances of online video. With his "expanded and retheorized notion of delivery designed for the distinctive rhetorical dynamics of Internet-based communication," James E. Porter reminds rhetoricians of the interplay between the canon of delivery, emerging web-based technologies, emotions, and commerce (207). He writes, "all writing...resides in economic systems of value, exchange, and capital...The kind of

economics I am talking about has to do with value more broadly defined" (218). There are many types of value associated with writing that do not involve money. Porter writes, "yes, it might involve the exchange of currency—but the motivation could be based on desire, participation, sharing, emotional connectedness. This is the secret of the Web 2.0 dynamic" (218). Chipotle has used this dynamic to dramatic effect, offering the promise of emotional connectedness through Web 2.0 delivery systems like YouTube. As the analysis of the video content above suggests (and which is displayed in the YouTube supercut "Chipotle Corporate Social Responsibility Campaign Review") this delivery mechanism is part and parcel of the process of Chipotlization. We can borrow the terms "transmittable" and "network" from Derrida ("Signature Event Context" 7) to suggest that Chipotle's system of globally reiteratable codes can be understood as a "transmittable network." When we talk about Chipotlization, then, we are talking about a transmittable network based on McDonaldization minus the creepy clown, plus online videos. Chipotle extends this network with a higher price point, more expensive real estate, and intricate CSR and branded-content strategies. The result is all sorts of interesting microrhetorics designed to get consumers to consume based on feelings.

Manufacturing Enchantment

It would be easy to situate Chipotle's miniseries as just the most recent and most high profile PR stunt in a campaign of the hyperreal that manufactures enchantment to compensate for the base, capitalist (lack of?) values. They create video games and music videos and co-branded blogs (See their "Food For Thought" blog in *The Huffington Post*) and streaming radio ("Are You Experienced?") and cups with copy from famous writers like

Malcolm Gladwell, Toni Morrison, George Saunders, and Michael Lewis (Makarechi) to distract us from the soullessness of corporate chain food. But that argument feels a bit too rehearsed. Obviously *Farmed and Dangerous* isn't going to get talked about in the same way that *The Wire* or even *Community* are discussed, but consider the audience. Going back to conventionalist understanding of mimesis, we have to consider the context for the reception of the work. Potolsky writes, "The conventionalist account makes mimesis radically dependent on the social and historical context in which a work is produced and received"(5). The video "The Making of *Farmed and Dangerous*" offers a clue about this. In the words of Mark Crumpacker, Chipotle's chief marketing officer, *Farmed and Dangerous* is on "the new frontier in marketing." That is how the show is being received by the media: as innovative marketing. Despite the fact that it appears alongside *Community* on Hulu, it is not being received as a TV show. Perhaps the target demographic for all this content is not the burrito-buying public, but marketers, advertisers, corporate executives, and the media that cover them. Perhaps Chipotle wants Richard Florida's creative class to discuss, admire, and replicate the way it sells its burritos. Potolsky writes that "a work that 'matches' the expectations of one culture or historical period might seem strange or artificial for another" (5). To a culture of rhetoricians or TV critics or literature professors, *Farmed and Dangerous* must seem at best heavy handed. But perhaps to a culture of marketing—creatives and suits alike—it solves a series of problems opened up by the disruptive technologies of Web 2.0. Certainly, the company's strategy is working, and for its effectiveness alone, it is worth studying. The success of the Chipotle brand also provides a model for other organizations looking to build their brands and capitalize (monetarily, socially, academically) on the dynamic of Web 2.0.

"Burstage Abatement"

I hope it is clear now that inquiry into the burrito is not a joke. I hope I have addressed the risks and rewards of investigating banal, everyday, material practices. I hope you have found it worthwhile. But another risk is now becoming apparent: this work is becoming a burrito. For the sake of what burritoeater.com editor Charles Hodgkins calls "burstage abatement," I will wrap it up.

In some ways, this has been a traditional academic paper, but it is bulging at the margins. Somehow it has too many total words and not enough of this ingredient or that. Perhaps it has an uneven distribution of ingredients with the point buried somewhere in the middle and the condiments glopped up at the ends. Perhaps there are structural integrity issues, wherein the problem often begins with too much appetite, continues with overstuffing and double wrapping, and concludes with burstage. Maybe there is no good way into it, no clear indication which end is the starting point. But I can live with this becoming a burrito. The burrito, as you have seen, is a complicated, imperfect food. Classic burritos keep well but are rather ascetic, perhaps just tortillas and beans. Overstuffed burritos are exciting, but don't travel well. We make our choices.

Back to the Start

Let us return to the Chipotle Mexican Grill where we began. You are standing in a burrito line with a choice to make. In this moment, trivial as it may seem, you are in a moment of hospitality, and the stakes are small, but high. The line is long so you have a moment to ponder all the things that brought you together in this exchange across the

border of what Arellano calls the "stations of the burrito." Who has orchestrated this exchange? How have they done it? How do they compel you to participate? Who has been kept out of the exchange? Who crosses the thresholds, both virtual and physical, put up around and inside the restaurant? Drawing on a strand of theory that comes from Clive Barnett and Derrida, Duruz echoes Barnett, quoting 'responsible action lies in the divisibility of borders and the finitude of boundaries, but not in their erasure. Thresholds are the very scenes for the drama of responsiveness, hospitality and responsibility' (90). In the piece Duruz is referencing, "Ways of Relating: Hospitality and the Acknowledgement of Otherness," Barnett writes, "Therefore, this ethics-as-hospitality is always already 'becoming political.' To put it another way, the border between the ethical and the political is not taken to be an indivisible limit" (17). Our responsibility is to acknowledge the threshold as the scene of drama and opportunities for rhetorical and social action. As the line moves along, and it is your turn to answer "What would you like?" You can hold up the line, frustrating everyone around you, or you can go with the flow, and say what you want, knowing that the exchange has been semiscripted for you. You can always go back to Chipotle or you can go to the taqueria down the street. You can exercise your micropolitics or you can shift your attention to the macropolitics implied by your micropolitics. You can join the movement to raise the minimum wage so that kitchen workers make a living wage. It should be obvious at this point that the burrito is a red herring. We have, all along, been exploring networks of power and persuasion and the transmittable logic of irreducible modularity. I have been using the burrito to demonstrate the myriad ways that food persuades. Every ingredient in every hotel pan in every station of every burrito joint transmits a situation. We can track those transmissions and read them as rhetorical. Understanding food rhetorically requires a

sensorial rhetoric that is more capacious than analysis of crafted speeches or words on pages. Food can help expand and enrich rhetoric in times of contraction; food brings something tangible and material to rhetoric. But such a commodious rhetoric also brings something to food. Of course, such a rhetoric brings out another dimension of food, feeding our intellect as well as our bodies. But more importantly, rhetoric consists of a set of tools, techniques, and concepts that can help improve our food systems and the people and animals wrapped up in it.

Chapter Two

Kale Rockstar: The Genre Pollan and the Discourse of Eating Well

"Just as we take pleasure in enriching our language
with layers of metaphor and allusion,
we apparently like to trope what we eat and drink, too,
extracting from it not only more nourishment
but more meaning as well—
more psychic nourishment, if you will."

—Michael Pollan, *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*

Required Reading: The Exigency of the Genre Pollan

As Chipotle Mexican Grill's "Food With Integrity" Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaign in the previous chapter exemplifies, companies are making ethics-based arguments to sell all manner of food. These campaigns are part of a complex discourse of

eating well."[5] One of the most prominent figures in the discourse of eating well is Michael Pollan. Chipotle lists two of Pollan's books—*Ominivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*—on its recommended reading list on a its CSR page. (See fig. 2.1.)

Fig. 2.1. Michael Pollan is recommended reading on Chipotle's website. Will Burdette; http://www.flickr.com/photos/34276541@N08/15818627381/, 18 Nov. 2014; Web; 18 Nov. 2014.

[5] Pollan is an important node in corporate rhetorical networks. Companies like Chipotle and Whole Foods Market seek to develop ethos with customers by citing and engaging with Pollan. In fact, Chipotle pulls many concepts directly from Pollan's work to create its marketing artifacts. Petroleum-based food fed directly to cows and then people—the central conceit of Chipotle's *Farmed and Dangerous* TV series—comes straight out of Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Citing Reay Tannahill's Food in History, Pollan writes, "agribusiness has long since mastered this trick of turning petroleum into steak." "Tall Grass Prairie," a Chipotle video produced as part of their CSR campaign is also the utopian landscape in Omnivore's Dilemma that contrasts with the dystopian landscape of big ag monoculture. Pollan writes of the Wisconsin glacier that deposited the soil for the prairie millennia ago, and "then compounded at the rate of another inch or two every decade by prairie grasses—big bluestem, foxtail, needlegrass, and switchgrass. Tall-grass prairie is what this land was until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the sod was first broken by the settler's plow." When Chipotle urges us to go "back to the start," this type of landscape is precisely what they hope to evoke.

Pollan's appearance on the "Food With Integrity" page is no surprise. Pollan writes, "Only when we participate in a short food chain are we reminded every week that we are indeed part of a food chain and dependent for our health on its peoples and soils and *integrity*—on its health" (*In Defense,* emphasis added). Like the words "organic" (Nowacek and Nowacek 404) and "natural" (Belasco), the word "integrity" has become rhetorically significant in contemporary food discourse, in no small part because of Pollan's work. Pollan sets the agenda for national food discourse.

The way Chipotle frames Pollan's books as "recommended reading" is apt. Pollan's work has become required reading for those interested in the so-called "food movement," which both deploys and debates not just food, but the language we use to talk about food. The connection between communication and food established by the network of citations between the likes of Pollan and Chipotle, for example, have made food into a topic of great interest to rhetoricians, and Pollan's work has become required reading for many academics as well.[6] Universities across the country have begun to engage with Pollan's network. In 2009-10, *In Defense of Food* was the first-year forum book in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at The University of Texas at Austin. That is, every student taking and every instructor teaching first-year writing at UT read *In Defense of Food*. In addition to UT-Austin, Pollan's work has been taught at University of California–Irvine (Tonkovich), The University of California–Berkeley (Taylor), University of Oregon ("About Common Reading"),

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[6] In *Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan discusses at length Whole Foods Market's style of communication, which he dubs "supermarket pastoral." He keeps this conversation going in "My Letter to Whole Foods," which is a response to Whole Foods Market CEO John Mackey's response to Omnivore's Dilemma. Pollan writes, "your stores—with their extensive information, signage, and well-informed counter help—are clearly in the business of educating people. You are selling information and stories as well as food, which is to say, you have set yourself the mission of leading, not just following, the consumer." In this response, he situates shopkeeping as pedagogy and food as communication.

University of Wisconsin–Madison, ("Go Big Read") and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Boiko). Most often when food has appeared in a rhetoric and composition publication in the past decade, Pollan is cited. Four of the five articles in the *College English* issue with a special focus on food cite Pollan (Schilb). An edited collection by rhetoric scholars, *The Rhetoric of Food: Discourse, Materiality, and Power,* mentions Pollan more than 30 times (Frye and Bruner). Another similar collection of articles by rhetoric scholars, *Food as Communication/Communication as Food* mentions Pollan more than a dozen times (Cramer, Greene, and Walters). *PRE/TEXT,* a journal of rhetorical theory, produced a special issue on food theory that mentions Pollan in six pieces (Vitanza, J.E. Rice, and J. Rice). Pollan speaks to academic audiences with great frequency and his work is often republished in writing textbooks and anthologies (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz). Pollan is not just deployed here and there in rhetoric and writing pedagogy and scholarship about food. He is often situated as the foundational figure for a rhetoric of food, with *Omnivore's Dilemma* cited as the seminal text (Brummett).

There are good reasons for scholars of rhetoric and writing to cite Pollan. He is what we might call a "kale rockstar," or someone who has developed celebrity around the promotion of whole foods. According to his website, he "was named to the 2010 *TIME* 100, the magazine's annual list of the world's 100 most influential people. In 2009 he was named by *Newsweek* as one of the top 10 'New Thought Leaders'" ("About Michael Pollan"). But while Pollan has become required reading for many of us, there has not been much of a conversation in the disciplines of rhetoric and composition about the role his work plays in framing the conversations around rhetoric, food, and eating well. For example, Pollan plays a prominent role in selecting the language that establishes a worldview from which to

approach a rhetoric of food. As George Lakoff writes in *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, "Framing is about getting language that fits your worldview. It is not just language. The ideas are primary—and language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas." On her way to a much more complex argument in "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of Différance," Barbara Biesecker outlines the ways that framing has been articulated in discussions of the rhetorical situation. She notes that for Murray Edelman, "'Language does not mirror an objective "reality" but rather creates it by organizing meaningful perceptions abstracted from a complex, bewildering world'" (qtd. in Biesecker 114). Biesecker notes that Chaim Perelman, Edelman, and Richard Vatz all recognize that, in Vatz's words, "'the very choice of what facts or events are relevant is a matter of pure arbitration [on the part of the speaker]' and how the communication of "'situations" is the translation of the chosen information into meaning'" (qtd. in Biesecker 113). In a rhetoric of food, Pollan is the figure when it comes to translating curated information into meaning. Even if we resist his translation or reject his information, we still respond to the agenda he sets. The more complicated point that Biesecker is headed toward is that deconstruction can refigure rhetoric to include intentional and unintentional moves and the way those moves are executed. She writes, "the appropriation of deconstruction by rhetorical theorists and critics can bring intelligibility to the rhetorical event by enabling them to read rhetoric as a divided sign: as the name for both the unwitting and interested gesture that structures any symbolic action and the figurality that puts us on its track" (127). So when I suggest that Pollan frames the rhetoric-of-food discussion, I do not mean to say that his intentional selection of language is all that establishes the frame. He is a node at/through which we gather, discuss, debate, and celebrate. That said, I want to figure Pollan not as an

individual rhetor in some tripartite rhetorical system, but as a genre. I do this in keeping with Biesecker's challenge to Vatz's and Bitzer's "conception of the human being that presumes an essence at the core of the individual that is coherent, stable, and which makes the human being what it is" (123). That is, we now know that rhetoric is more complicated than exigency calling a rhetor or a rhetor composing exigency. We know that rhetors are not merely the "sovereign, rational subjects" that they were once seen as (Biesecker 127). Audiences are not merely a crowd of individual humans. So if Pollan has some sort a curatorial or agenda-setting power, it is not as simple as a skilled writer and orator directing his audience's attention. Instead, his work establishes a set of expectations through repeated genre conventions. These genre conventions determine, in part, what we talk about when we talk about rhetoric and food. If there is a motivation behind my reading of Pollan as genre it is an attempt to see how "truths" are constructed through convention in the genre.

Pollan as a Genre

Situating Michael Pollan a "genre" may stretch the definition of genre. Genres are often grouped by similarities in form, style, or subject matter, not necessarily by author. For example, in "Genre as Social Action" Carolyn R. Miller writes, "rhetorical genres have been defined by similarities in strategies or forms in the discourses, by similarities in audience, by similarities in modes of thinking, by similarities in rhetorical situations" (151). This loose definition has created some confusion, or, as Miller writes, "[t]he diversity among these definitions presents both theorists and critics with a problem" (151). To solve this problem, Miller attempts to stabilize the concept of genre. At the same time, she recognizes some

flexibility in genre, defining it as "ways of 'acting together'" and writing that "it does not lend itself to taxonomy" (163).

Writing about genre in "The Rhetoric of Exorcism: George W. Bush and the Return of Political Demonology," Josh Gunn demonstrates an even more flexible idea of genre. He explains that genres are primarily social, negotiated concepts. He writes, "Genres reside in the collective, mental space of a community or audience, and assume a content within a given context. Once an audience identifies the repetition of an underlying social form within a rhetorical act, it becomes a 'genre'" (6). Citing Adena Rosemarin's *The Power of Genre*, he writes, "genres are retroactive, critical descriptions that identify a pattern among a set of texts" (6). As such, they are "more akin to myth and archetype than textual template" and part of "the social field, the collective mental life of a given audience" (6). Gunn's genre is fluid but allows ideas to cohere as they flow through the social field.[7] With this understanding of genre, we can trace the elements that constitute a genre and map the "internal dynamic of the constellation" of the genre (Foss 226). I read Pollan to uncover these patterns of thought. To do so, I articulate the elements of the genre and show how repetitions of those elements set up conventions, and establish the expectations that constitute the genre. At issue here is what Pollan, understood as a genre, contributes to a rhetoric of food. I argue that—given the frequency of citation in the academic fields concerned with food—the generic elements created around and through Pollan structure the rhetoric of food inside the academy. Reading Pollan as a genre also demonstrates how repetitions of forms coalesce into genre conventions that are then redeployed rhetorically

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[7] This kind of fluid understanding of genre encourages the tracing of genres and (and their responses) across media, as Clay Spinuzzi does in *Tracing Genres through Organizations: A Sociocultural Approach to Information Design*. Spinuzzi writes about how genres are made up of "mediating artifacts" that "qualitatively change the entire activity in which workers engage" (38).

outside the academy, as Chipotle does on its "Food With Integrity" web page ("Chipotle Mexican Grill"). I take my definition of "genre conventions" from Laura Wilder who writes that "conventions may include far more than socially sanctioned textual surface features of style and arrangement" (16). While textual elements can become generic, they are not all there is to genre. Wilder writes, "Instead, conventions associated with invention such as stases and topoi tie a rhetor's exigencies, choice of topics and approaches, and self-representation—essentially the heart of what she has to say and how she says it—to her relationship with a particular discourse community" (16).

What follows is a mapping of elements in Pollan's work that constitute a set of genre conventions. At present, the genre Pollan is made up of more than a hundred articles, seven books, two of which have illustrated editions: *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education*; *A Place of My Own: The Architecture of Daydreams (The Education of an Amateur Builder); The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World; The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals; The Omnivore's Dilemma: Young Readers Edition: The Secrets Behind What You Eat; In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto; Food Rules: An Eater's Manual; Food Rules, Illustrated Edition: An Eater's Manual; and Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation.* I'll look primarily at his books, all but one of which are about food; including the articles is outside the scope of this project. In looking at his books, we find the following genre conventions in his approach to food writing: a first person perspective, a personal speculative methodology, carefully crafted structures, an ecological worldview, an intellectual style, an emphasis on the language of food, a preference for pastoral places, and a neo-Epicurean ethics. Additionally, critics of Pollan bring genre elements of their own to the reading of his texts, establishing conventions in the genre by countering certain elements they see implied in it. These

critiques of the genre in some ways co-create it by pointing out subtextual conventions of the text.

First-Person Narrative

One of the first conventions of the genre Pollan is a very particular kind of first-person perspective. The perspective is personal, emotional, self-aware, and relational. Pollan's style in his first two books—his first-person persona, his situatedness, and his ideas about storytelling—comes from his experience in magazine writing and editing. He says, "a lot of the way I write pieces comes out of the way we were doing it at *Harper's* in the '80s" (qtd. in Demory). He says "[O]ur journalism was always narrative, and it was usually based on a microcosm, rather than trying to be comprehensive, and there was usually a first person who would declare his or her interests somewhere near the beginning of the story" (qtd. in Demory). He calls his training at *Harper's* "really instrumental in my learning how to write." Pollan's first person perspective is accompanied by a fascination with the natural world and Proustian remembrances. For example, in *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education,* he writes, "I guess you could say the forest made me do it. But there was also, mixed in with my motives, the recollected satisfactions of childhood gardens." The call he is responding to is coming from within and, perhaps partly, from nature. But there is no immediate crisis to address, no moment of national exigency. It is a book that comes out of natural and personal exigencies. The book is contemplative, meandering from musings on his gardens like the one above, to pronouncements about nature in general, to the significance of the seasons, to issues of class, to family history, to books, to philosophy, and to culture. Pollan is characteristically self-conscious about his discursive style. About *Second Nature* he writes, "though this book is

not a polemic, it is full of argument: between me and this vexing piece of land, and also between me and some of the traditional ways of looking at nature in America." He is also conscious of his own meandering style amid the arguments: "Many of these arguments don't get settled; this book is an exercise in discovery rather than truth telling. It is, as I say, the story of an education, and, as will be clear from the high incidence of folly in these pages, I remain more pupil than teacher."

In *A Place of My Own: The Architecture of Daydreams (The Education of an Amateur Builder)* we see Pollan pick up where he left off in *Second Nature*. He writes again about gardening in his second book, but rather than building a garden, this time Pollan is building "a writing house." The writing house is an office in the woods not far from his house, where he can retreat to contemplate away—but not too far away—from his wife and newborn child:

> I was in the process of pulling my life up by the roots, all at once becoming a father, leaving the city where I'd lived since college, and setting out on an uncertain new career. Indeed, it would have been strange if I hadn't entertained fantasies of escape or, as I preferred to think of it, simplification—of reducing so many daunting new complexities to something as stripped-down and uncomplicated as a hut in the woods.

Situated in uncertainties, Pollan is again responding to a call that is personal. The world was not necessarily calling for a memoir of a writer building a place to write, but Pollan was himself compelled to entertain the fantasies of escape and simplification until he could transmute them into a productive reality. These fantasies—writ large as an escape to a simplified version of an agrarian past—recur throughout his body of work. Two points

about his first-person narrative nonfiction style are salient here. As Pollan points out, this style was already conventional for magazine writing in places like *Harper's*. Part of that genre convention is knowing its limitations, which is why the concept of microcosm is important. Pollan has to assume that his interests (planting seeds, hammering nails) in his microcosm (garden, building project) will be generalizable for a national audience. To a large extent, they are. But they also come wrapped up with his ideas and fantasies about nature, culture, and escape. This is part of the humanizing element of this convention. The narrative in this genre is not just an account of events; it is shaped by emotions like uncertainty, anxiety, fear, joy, and pleasure.

The first two books are somewhat personal, but *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* attempts to push beyond the subject position of the I. The book is still written in first person, of course, but it is focused on the coevolution of humans and particular plants. As per usual, contemplation in the garden is the situation out of which Pollan's work emerges: "The seeds of this book were first planted in my garden—while I was planting seeds, as a matter of fact. Sowing seed is pleasant, desultory, not terribly challenging work; there's plenty of space left over for thinking about other things while you're doing it." What he was contemplating was the presence of bees near where he was sowing seed. He writes, "What I found myself thinking about was this: What existential difference is there between the human being's role in this (or any) garden and the bumblebee's?" and "So the question arose in my mind that day: Did I choose to plant these potatoes, or did the potato make me do it? In fact, both statements are true." Pollan remembers seeing a picture of a potato in a seed catalog and deciding to buy it, but he's not sure what led him to it. He writes:

> This was a trivial, semiconscious event; it never occurred to me that our catalog encounter was of any evolutionary consequence whatsoever. Yet evolution consists of an infinitude of trivial, unconscious events, and in the evolution of the potato my reading of a particular seed catalog on a particular January evening counts as one of them.

The rest of the book is a quest to explain how human desires for sweetness, beauty, intoxication, and control led us to cultivate apples, tulips, marijuana, and potatoes. Substantial parts of this book are composed of histories of these plants and the characters and situations that aided in their evolution. For example, Johnny Appleseed is a folk hero not because he spread apples for pies across the American West, but because he brought apples for hard cider to the frontier. The stories and anecdotes are nice, but the more substantial arguments are the ones about subjectivity. As Pollan thinks about "the long chain of gardeners and botanists, plant breeders, and, these days, genetic engineers who 'selected,' 'developed,' or 'bred' the particular potato" that he decided to plant, he gets characteristically caught up in the words. He writes, "Even our grammar makes the terms of this relationship perfectly clear: *I choose the plants, I pull the weeds, I harvest the crops.* We divide the world into subjects and objects, and here in the garden, as in nature generally, we humans are the subjects." Then he has an equally characteristic contemplation: "[T]hat afternoon in the garden I found myself wondering: What if that grammar is all wrong? What if it's really nothing more than a self-serving conceit?" He continues, comparing us to the bees, writing, "The truth of the matter is that the flower has cleverly manipulated the bee into hauling its pollen from blossom to blossom. The ancient relationship between bees and flowers is a classic example of what is known as 'coevolution.'" Much of the substance of the book is

made up of such constructions. So the next thing to note about the first-person narrative convention in the genre is that it is a first-person account that is complicated by metacognition and an ecological worldview. Everywhere, Pollan is thinking about and recording his thinking, and thinking about how his writing shapes his thinking. And he's thinking about his position in a larger ecology. So, although a first-person perspective is a convention of the genre, it is a complex first-person perspective. To truly be Pollanesque, imitators would have to strike the same kind of balance between the self-reflexive first-person perspective, the knowledge that such a perspective is a construction, and the understanding of how that construction fits in with other constructions.

Carefully Crafted Structures

Work in this genre is crafted to be read on multiple levels. A chapter or section title will often refer to both a cultural concept and a material artifact or process at the same time. *Second Nature* initiates this hallmark of the Pollan genre with a clever structure that emphasizes the interplay between social construction and the natural world. In this case, the structure mirrors nature, with chapters neatly wrapped in seasons. For example, "Why Mow?" is in the section titled "Spring." "Weeds Are Us" is packaged in "Summer." "The Harvest" is contained by "Fall." "The Garden Tour" is nestled into "Winter." In *A Place of My Own* the structure is determined by parts of the building process like "The Site," "On Paper," "Footings," "Framing," "The Roof," "Windows," and "Finish Work." While this may seem a straightforward way to structure a book about building a space, consider what Pollan means by "Windows." No mere panes of glass, windows in this book are more about about ways of seeing, lenses we put on. He recounts a conversation with the architect about why

he must have custom-made windows instead of buying them off the shelf. The architect says, "To use stock windows here would be like buying those cheapo reading glasses they sell off the rack at Woolworth's. Maybe they do the job, I don't know. But you can't say it's the same thing as having your own prescription. That's what these are: prescription windows." In Pollan's structure, windows—and every other element of the writing house—are metaphors for ways of seeing and perceiving the world. He writes, "Every window is an interpretation of a landscape." Pollan's style, then, helps his readers see places like the garden or the office in rhetorical terms. The window aids in rhetorical interpretation, literally framing what can be perceived. *The Botany of Desire* has a similarly neat structure, pairing a plant with a desire for each chapter. For example, the chapters are listed as "Desire: Sweetness / Plant: The Apple," "Desire: Beauty / Plant: The Tulip," "Desire: Intoxication / Plant: Marijuana," and "Desire: Control / Plant: The Potato." *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is broken up into "Industrial: Corn," "Pastoral: Grass," and "Personal: The Forest." *In Defense of Food* is structured as a manifesto with chapters like "The Elephant in the Room" and "Escape from the Western Diet." Each chapter in *Food Rules* is a folksy prescription like "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food" or "Treat meat as a flavoring or special occasion food" that is elaborated on for a paragraph or so. *Cooked* is arranged around the elements with sections titled "Fire," "Water," "Air," and "Earth," which correspond to cooking practices like barbecuing, braising, baking, and fermenting. For each book, we could elaborate on the way that the structure informs the content, as with the "Windows" chapter of *A Place of My Own*. But the point here is not to perform a complete analysis of the

structure of Pollan's books, but to point out that each book is structured like a concept album, and the concept can be deduced, in part, from the intertitles.[8]

Personal Speculative Methodology

Pollan's self-reflexive first-person narrative style, and his carefully crafted structures are co-constitutive with what I call his personal speculative methodology or methodological guessing. In *A Place of My Own*, he demonstrates this methodology when he writes:

> Work is how we situate ourselves in the world, and like the work of many people nowadays, mine put me in a relationship to the world that often seemed abstract, glancing, secondhand. Or thirdhand, in my case, for I spent much of my day working on other peoples' words, rewriting, revising, rewording. Oh, it was real work (I guess), but it didn't always feel that way, possibly because there were whole parts of me it failed to address. (Like my body, with the exception of the carpal tunnel in my wrist.)

Here we see Pollan reflecting on the abstractness of the work he does, noting that writing's embodiment tends to come to the forefront only when something fails to work. We see his hesitance about calling writing and editing "real work;" the self-reflexive parenthetical may be more precisely categorized as a stylistic tic rather than something of substance. But this "I guess," actually has more to say about the substance of Pollan's work than one might initially imagine. That is, the "I guess" is methodological, in a subject/verb way. First he says writing and editing is "real work" and then he adds the parenthetical "(I guess)" to suggest that

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[8] Gérard Genette has shown, in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, the relationship between intertitles and the genre status of the work. In other words, titles have interpretive value when it comes to genre determinations.

maybe, for all sorts of reasons, his initial definition of "real work" is insufficient. In his first two books, in the hunting parts of *Omnivore's Dilemma*, and in his more recent book, *Cooked*, Pollan's method is to put himself in the position of student, to make a few guesses, and then to get a master, teacher, or mentor to show him how it is done. In this way, the "I guess" suggests a relationality, as if to say, "I guess it was real work, but maybe it would not be considered real work if you asked a carpenter." Then he talks to a carpenter and redefines his definition of work in relation to the carpenter.

These conventions, the first-personal narrative and personal speculative methodology, impact the genre in substantive ways. There are elements of seeking inherent in these conventions. For example, Pollan writes about growing marijuana in is youth: "as things turned out, my experiment in growing marijuana was of a piece with my experience smoking it, paranoid and stupid being the operative terms." But this experience led to an interest in the plant for the book, which led to a "research trip" to Amsterdam, where marijuana is sold legally. The substance of the book begins in the garden, but the development of the concept of desire in this chapter—that of intoxication—requires a personal followthrough that is both constitutive and characteristic of his style. For Pollan to write about marijuana, he had to experience it, not just in the past, but as part of the research process required by his methodology. The subject of the chapter on marijuana, then, feeds back into the style of the writing. Pollan's personal style of writing is inextricable from his method. It is not so much that marijuana altered his writing style, but that his writing style altered his consumption habits. Without the anecdotes about growing pot and the trip to Amsterdam to partake, the chapter on intoxication is a very different chapter, and the desires of the book shift. Indeed, the very concept of desire, where it comes from,

shifts. The plant beckoned to Pollan and his style is to answer the call (and take notes). As Avital Ronell writes in *Crack Wars*, "Indeed, the plant puts you to work on a whole mnemonic apparatus. Intoxication names a method of mental labor that is responsible for making phantoms appear" (5). Ronell's insights that intoxication is a method for anamnesis and that plants can put us to work on repressed desires fit with the kinds of co-evolution Pollan writes about in *The Botany of Desire*. Our desires are not determined solely by individual appetites and articulable wants; we are pulled toward intoxication, beauty, sweetness, and control by forces working on us for generations before we were born. These first two conventions set up expectations in the audience about how they will be addressed by Pollan. A methodology that approaches food in this way is going to produce very different results than, say, Marion Nestle's methodology in *Food Politics*. Nestle and Pollan may arrive at many similar conclusions, but they get there by very different routes. Nestle is a nutritionist and is keenly interested in public policy and public health. She's interested in food from a macropolitical perspective. *Food Politics,* for example, is full of tables, something you do not find anywhere in the genre Pollan. Pollan is interested in food from a personal, micropolitical perspective. Pollan works through personal narrative, speculation, and contemplation.

An Ecological Worldview

Although *The Botany of Desire* is where Pollan began to most explicitly articulate an ecological worldview that defines and questions the limits of human agency, this line of coevolutionary thinking was evident in his writing as early as *Second Nature*. In both books, he questions notions of agency and intentions in lines like, "the forest made me do it" in *Second*

Nature and "did the potato make me do it?" in *The Botany of Desire*. His ecological worldview has its roots in transcendental philosophy, but moves away from it in his first book. In *Second Nature*, Pollan writes, "I was a child of Thoreau. But the ways of seeing nature I'd inherited from him, and the whole tradition of nature writing he inspired, seemed not to fit my experiences." This worldview is important to note because the genre Pollan begins not in the kitchen or the garden, but the library. In an interview with Ruth Reichl, Pollan says:

> I got interested in gardens because I was interested in nature and wilderness and Thoreau and Emerson. I brought all their intellectual baggage to my garden here in New England and found that it didn't work out very well, because ultimately Thoreau and Emerson's love for nature was confined to the wild. They didn't conceive of a role for us in nature other than as admirer and spectator...which is a problem when a woodchuck eats all your seedlings. What do you do?

When a woodchuck eats a quarter-acre of Thoreau's beans, he writes "what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden?" whereas Pollan writes about firebombing a woodchuck's burrow in *Second Nature*. "I find I spend a lot of time arguing with Thoreau," Pollan writes in *Second Nature*. The intellectual "baggage" Pollan brings into the garden (and the construction site and the kitchen) is part of the genre. And we can see the weight of that tradition in his earliest work as well as his reflections on his early work. This affects his treatment of culture, of which he writes:

> If nature is one necessary source of instruction for a garden ethic, culture is the other. Civilization may be part of our problem with respect to nature, but there will be no solution without it. As Wendell Berry has pointed out, it is

> culture, and certainly not nature, that teaches us to observe and remember, to learn from our mistakes, to share our experiences, and perhaps most important of all, to restrain ourselves. Nature does not teach its creatures to control their appetites except by the harshest of lessons—epidemics, mass death, extinctions. Nothing would be more natural than for humankind to burden the environment to the extent that it was rendered unfit for human life.

In the above quote, we see several generic elements that will be rearticulated throughout Pollan's work: the tension between nature and culture; the power of culture to solve problems presented by nature; the fondness for Wendell Berry, who gets quoted in all but a couple of his works; the ability (and responsibility) of humans to control their appetites, lest they lay waste to their environment. All these generic elements belong to a larger convention rooted in a turn away from transcendentalists and toward a Wendall Berry-esque environmentalism or ecological perspective. As will become clear later when we discuss the word "pastoral," it is significant that Berry is a farmer. In this genre, the relationship to the environment is a working relationship. In *Second Nature*, Pollan writes about working the compost pile: "[a]mong the many, many things the green thumb knows is the consolation of the compost pile, where nature, ever obliging, redeems this season's deaths and disasters in the fresh promise of next spring." In the compost pile, nature does the work. But if a gardener wants to work nature, a gardener has to work the compost pile.

In *The Botany of Desire*, ecological thinking shapes the entire book and develops through the idea of coevolution. Pollan writes:

> In a coevolutionary bargain like the one struck by the bee and the apple tree, the two parties act on each other to advance their individual interests but wind up trading favors: food for the bee, transportation for the apple genes. Consciousness needn't enter into it on either side, and the traditional distinction between subject and object is meaningless.

This is where Pollan really begins to complicate his first-person narrative style with an ecological perspective. This perspective its not just about the interconnectedness of nature and culture, but also about the ways in which small personal movements (conscious or not) are aggregated and connected to larger social movements. Although he does not use the word "micropolitics," the idea that everyday actions are political is everywhere in his work, and that idea is fundamental to his ecological worldview.

The idea of the micropolitical also shows up in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. There again is that moment—always personal, specific, and crafted—when the book officially begins. In the early aughts, when carbophobia was ramping up, many people stopped buying bread, and Pollan takes note. He writes, "For me the absurdity of the situation became inescapable in the fall of 2002, when one of the most ancient and venerable staples of human life abruptly disappeared from the American dinner table. I'm talking of course about bread." A simple, individual choice, like deciding not to buy bread, when aggregated creates a mass movement. Pollan writes, "Virtually overnight, Americans changed the way they eat." He calls the change "violent" and "a national eating disorder." He claims carbophobia "would never have happened in a culture in possession of deeply rooted traditions surrounding food and eating" and implies that something is wrong when a culture makes "its most august legislative body...deliberate the nation's 'dietary goals.'" People did

not stop buying bread out of personal preference; they were responding to a national anxiety over carbohydrates, which were supposedly connected to the obesity epidemic. When things like obesity are epidemonized, categorized, and treated as infectious diseases, exigency is created on both the macropolitical and micropolitical levels. Kairotic moments open up on all sides of the issue. Pollan's kairotic moments are always recreated and represented for readers. But this time, the situation resonated beyond anything he had written previously. This time, he responds not to an internal quandary or personal contemplation, but to an external, nationwide exigency. It is when he turned into a kale rockstar. It is also at this moment that people in rhetoric and composition began citing his work.

After that, he turns to *In Defense of Food*, also widely cited, and *Food Rules*. Both texts are aimed at eaters, which is to say, a very broad audience. *In Defense of Food* is positioned as a manifesto and *Food Rules* as a manual. We might see manifestos and manuals as part of other genres, or as sub-genres in the genre Pollan, but there is another way to read them as well. From an ecological worldview that sees micropolitical activity as significant, there is a logic in trying to direct that micropolitical activity through texts like these. If Pollan's worldview suggests that how we eat or shop for groceries has political ramifications, then it makes sense that the next step for him would be to tell readers how to shop, cook, and eat in ways that align with his worldview. For example, in *Food Rules*, he writes, "Avoid food products that contain high-fructose corn syrup." In his worldview, there are political ramifications to this advice, ramifications that, for example, Archer Daniels Midland—the world's leading producer of HFCS—might be opposed to. Several generic elements shape Pollan's ecological worldview. There is the wrestling with Thoreau, the active engaged relationship with the natural world, the Wendall Berry-esque agrarianism, the suspicion of the products of big,

corporate agriculture. All of these generic elements shape his worldview and create a convention through which his audience develops expectations for how to relate to him.

An Intellectual (Not Academic) Style

One of the most important things about the style of writing in Pollan's genre is that he belongs to a relatively small tradition of intellectual food writers who focus on the social, cultural, political, and philosophical aspects of food rather than reviews, recipes, celebrity chef culture, guidebooks, fiction, agricultural news and policy, or travelogues. Pollan's work emerged at the same time as academic journals like *Gastronomica, Food and Foodways,* and *Food, Culture, and Society,* where he is frequently cited. His brand of everyday food philosophy is less folksy than, say, Wendall Berry or Calvin Trillin, but it still does not quite fit in the same category as someone doing food studies in an academic journal. He chose not to publish in academic journals or with academic presses. Even though he has an advanced degree in English, Pollan made "a major personal gamble...that he could write meaningfully about American culture, and in particular our relation to nature, as a journalist rather than as an English professor" (Schoch). Perhaps his decision was shaped by the ambivalence of the academy toward matters of the body.

The very notion of mixing food and philosophy in the Western tradition is tricky. As Lisa Heldke puts it:

> The discipline of Western philosophy tends to be suspicious of new domains of inquiry, particularly when the domain in question seems so commonplace and ordinary—quotidian—also so embodied and temporal. Western philosophy characteristically has concerned itself with lofty mailers, with

> minds and the mental, and has left other fields to consider physical bodies—bodies that grow hungry, grow old, and die. Food—let it be said clearly—belongs unambiguously on the side of the bodily, the temporal, the quotidian (202).

Heldke points out that despite Western philosophy's characterization of temporal and embodied matters as lesser than mental matters, philosophers still wrote about food. For example, Heldke points out the central role food plays in Plato's *The Republic*. We might add some more examples. In *On the Soul*, Aristotle writes "Since nothing except what is alive can be fed, what is fed is the besouled body and just because it has soul in it. Hence food is essentially related to what has soul in it." In *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus writes, "And even as people choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest." Natural philosopher Pliny the Elder wrote extensively on food in his *Natural History*. More recently, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau writes, "The foods that are selected by traditions and sold in the markets of a society also shape bodies at the same time that they nourish them; they impose on bodies a form and a muscle tone that function like an identity card." Food in philosophy is at once conventionally shunned and often remarked upon. This is the context in which Pollan's work is published: amid Western philosophy's ambivalent relationship to food, alongside academic journals on food and culture, but not in them. The odd context results in a style that is a kind of para-academic pop intellectualism.

There is a generic element to the way Pollan deploys philosophy in his work. Take, for example, the way he engages with Derrida in *A Place of My Own* to emphasize the relationship between philosophy and architecture. Pollan writes, "Jacques Derrida has made a

brilliant career of illuminating the inconstant 'undergrounds' beneath the supposedly firm and final ground of metaphysical truth. It's for good reason that the most famous critique of metaphysics goes by the name of 'deconstruction.'" The concepts of philosophy and architecture flow across disciplinary borders. Pollan writes about the irony of the idea that "after centuries of lending philosophers the authority of their architectural metaphors, architects today should be so eager to borrow the one metaphor from philosophy—deconstruction—whose express purpose is to attack that very authority." Pollan's brief mention of deconstruction is not likely to make a contribution to a scholarly conversation on Derrida, deconstruction, or architecture. However, this excerpt illustrates the way that Pollan attempts to bridge the disciplines of philosophy, architecture, popular writing, and, later, food to remix them into a new, distinct genre.

In a more food-centric example, Pollan uses Plato to argue that cooking allowed us the time needed for philosophy and culture. Quoting Galen quoting Plato, in *Cooked*, Pollan writes:

> 'Voracious animals . . . both feed continually and as incessantly eliminate,' the Roman physician Galen of Pergamum pointed out, 'leading a life truly inimical to philosophy and music, as Plato has said, whereas nobler animals neither eat nor eliminate continually.' By freeing us from the need to feed constantly, cooking ennobled us, putting us on the path to philosophy and music. All those myths that trace the godlike powers of the human mind to a divine gift or theft of fire may contain a larger truth than we ever realized.

In *Cooked*, Pollan draws on the work of many scholars—Plato, Lévi-Strauss, Richard Wrangham, Gaston Bachelard—in much the same way. That is, he seasons his work with

philosophers to lend an intellectual air to it. His citations seem neither forced, nor unfaithful to the original, but they also often do not seem fundamental to arguments he is making. As elements of a genre convention, citations like this serve as cues to his audience, opportunities for identification as members of an educated, or at least well-read, group. For example, toward the end of *Cooked*, he writes "By now you will not be surprised to learn that Gaston Bachelard had a few things to say about the element of air. In a book called *Air and Dreams*, he points out that we categorize many of our emotions by their relative weight; they make us feel heavier or lighter." In the first part of that quote, he is indicating that it has become conventional for him to drop a philosopher's work in here and there.

Another element of this convention is the way Pollan weaves the everyday experiences that he observes and discusses with people into a kind of generalized philosophy. Pollan finds that philosophical traditions both comment on and constitute the food cultures and subcultures he interacts with. In some cases, philosophical traditions literally constitute "cultures," in many senses of that word. For example, when Pollan is hanging out in the fermento culture—the post-Pasteurian people who make and advocate for a range of fermented foods, from cheese to kimchi to kombucha—he became acquainted with Sandor Katz, who he calls, in *Cooked*, "the Johnny Appleseed of fermentation." He explains how philosophy and practicality give rise to both cultures, as in live bacteria, and a culture:

> I was immediately struck by Sandor's anticharismatic mode of address. He is utterly unpretentious, refusing to mystify his expertise in any way. If anything, he makes what he does sound rather ho-hum. Sandor also refuses to be categorical about anything. His answer to every other question is 'Well,

> it is and it isn't,' or 'Yes and no,' or 'It really depends,' or 'Every fermentation is different.' His shrug gets a good workout, too. I came to see that his diffidence reflects both a practical and a philosophical stance. There is no 'right' way to ferment anything, no hard and fast rules.

He continues, explaining how Katz's perspective is suited to his cultures. Pollan writes, "given how little we understand about the microbial world, one where bacteria can trade genes and their exact identities are often up for grabs, it would be hubris to pretend to certainty." He comes to a similar conclusion through his work with bread whisperer Chad Robertson of Tartine Bakery & Cafe in San Francisco. "As I realized when I was learning to bake bread, for a human to have a good working relationship with bacteria and fungi, it helps to possess a healthy degree of negative capability. These are cultures you can nudge, perhaps even manage, but never entirely control, or even comprehend." He learns this again when making cheese with a nun in the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Connecticut. He writes, "'Nature imperfectly mastered,' a phrase I heard from a cheesemaker, stands as a pretty good definition of this work, which has much in common with gardening." With that comment, Pollan circles all the way back around to his first book, *Second Nature*, in which he writes "Writing and gardening, these two ways of rendering the world in rows, have a great deal in common." The second element to this genre convention is the intellectualization of everyday tasks. In other words, to generate a philosophy, Pollan does not always start from the abstract and work to the particular. Sometimes, he begins with the particular and abstracts up to the philosophical.

An Emphasis on the Language of Food

There are several generic elements in which Pollan demonstrates his attention to the language of food. As the structural and stylistic elements addressed above have suggested, Pollan is interested in the way language fits together, and he writes explicitly about the language of food, which I'll address below. However, it should be noted that even when he is not overtly writing about language, particular word choices resonate in the culture. When these words refer to material foods, those foods resonate too. If there is one thing that can be said about *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, it is this: the meals are well thought out. The ingredients are not chosen at random, based on the cook's limited repertoire, or selected without a thought about their place in the market. The foods in the book signify even though they are only experienced secondhand through language. Put another way, foods in the book signify *because* they can only be experienced in language. Foods put into words derive their power from the cultural resonances they participate in. Take, for example, "kale." "Kale," in many ways, is a keyword in *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* even thought it only plays a bit part. At the heart of *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* the book that turned Pollan into a household name, is an industrial-organic meal of roasted chicken, kale, red winter squash, asparagus, spring mix salad, and blackberries and ice cream. Pollan writes, "After removing the chicken from the oven, I spread the crinkled leaves of kale on a cookie sheet, sprinkled them with olive oil and salt, and slid them into the hot oven to roast. After ten minutes or so, the kale was nicely crisped and the chicken was ready to carve." If you've ever wondered where the crispy kale trend came from, you might look no further. A dark, fibrous green, kale is about as far from the fast-food hamburger's iceberg lettuce as one can get. It epitomizes industrial organic because it is hearty enough to withstand long supply chains, but earthy enough to lend a whiff of healthiness to whatever it touches. It is also has a literary connection to the

genre of nineteenth century Scottish writing known as the "The Kailyard School." Kale's popularity soared in the years after it was featured in *Omnivore's Dilemma*. This is not to imply a causal link to Pollan, but from 2007 to 2012, kale production more than doubled (Martin). "Kale" also became a word with pop-cultural significance, as evidenced by its appearance on numerous T-shirts and sweatshirts (Burdette, "Kale T-Shirts"). Beyoncé wore a kale sweatshirt (and little else) in a music video for the song "7/11" in the fall of 2014 (Knowles-Carter). Pollan is not a kale rockstar at the level of Beyoncé, but his rise parallels the rise of kale. I point out these pop cultural kale tidbits to suggest one of the ways that food communicates in the genre is to catch onto and amplify food trends. Kale is but one example. We might point to the kind of sourdough bread he bakes in *Cooked* or the his defense of butter in *In Defense of Food*.

In addition to food-trend-signifying, language also frequently serves as the subject matter of the genre. That is, Pollan is never just talking about food as food, he's always also talking about how we talk about food. Take, for example, the section of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* titled "Supermarket Pastoral." "Supermarket Pastoral" is a rhetorical analysis of the images and language used to sell food in supermarkets like Whole Foods Market (where Pollan bought his kale). This passage gets at the link between language and food:

> Shopping at Whole Foods is a literary experience, too. That's not to take anything away from the food, which is generally of high quality, much of it 'certified organic' or 'humanely raised' or 'free range.' But right there, that's the point: It's the evocative prose as much as anything else that makes this food really special, elevating an egg or chicken breast or bag of arugula from the realm of ordinary protein and carbohydrates into a much headier

> experience, one with complex aesthetic, emotional, and even political dimensions. Take the 'range-fed' sirloin steak I recently eyed in the meat case. According to the brochure on the counter, it was formerly part of a steer that spent its days 'living in beautiful places' ranging from 'plant-diverse, high-mountain meadows to thick aspen groves and miles of sagebrush-filled flats.' Now a steak like that has got to taste better than one from Safeway, where the only accompanying information comes in the form of a number: the price, I mean, which you can bet will be considerably less. But I'm evidently not the only shopper willing to pay more for a good story.

For Pollan, Whole Foods Market is "a place where the skills of a literary critic might come in handy." The entire network that is Whole Foods Market is a text to be analyzed. That includes, but is not limited to, Whole Foods Market's discourse. The substance of this book is not just about, say, organic kale and where it came from, but also the language that we use to talk about, sell, and prepare kale. And, this is where Pollan expands from an author of books to a full-on celebrity with a genre of food writing that revolves around the agendas he sets. It is not only kale. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan touches on many commonplaces in our contemporary discussions of food: the problems of fast food and industrial corn, the problems with confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and industrial meat, the problems of obesity, cereal rhetorics, the wonders of tall grass prairies, the complexity of the food system, barcodes as symbols of what is wrong with food, grass-fed everything, the joys of foraging, the ethics of hunting and eating animals, the joys of the garden, the rhetoric of supermarkets. Even after a decade, all these topics are still relevant in food discourse.

A focus on the language of food in one book does not a convention make, but Pollan does not limit his attention the language of food to one book. As suggested in the section on his intellectual style, Pollan is always interested in language, and this interest shows up in every one of his books. *A Place of My Own,* features several passages on language, but does not deal with food in any direct way, so I'll bracket out that one for now. In *Second Nature*, he writes about how our relationship to nature is structured by own language. He writes, "Even once we have recognized the falseness of the dichotomy between nature and culture, it is hard to break its hold on our minds and our language; look how often I fall back on its terms. Our alienation from nature runs deep." This alienation seems to be central to the convention that develops in Pollan's work of unpacking language to expose the tensions at work in that dichotomy.

The following excerpt, from *In Defense of Food,* is another good demonstration of the unpacking of the language of food to show how it mediates our relationship to food. Examining the USDA's nutrition guidelines, he writes:

> Leave aside for now the virtues, if any, of a low-meat and /or low-fat diet, questions to which I will return, and focus for a moment on language. For with these subtle changes in wording a whole way of thinking about food and health underwent a momentous shift. First, notice that the stark message to "eat less" of a particular food—in this case meat—had been deep-sixed; don't look for it ever again in any official U.S. government dietary pronouncement. Say what you will about this or that food, you are not allowed officially to tell people to eat less of it or the industry in question will have you for lunch. But there is a path around this immovable obstacle, and it

> was McGovern's staffers who blazed it: Speak no more of foods, only nutrients. Notice how in the revised guidelines, distinctions between entities as different as beef and chicken and fish have collapsed. These three venerable foods, each representing not just a different species but an entirely different taxonomic class, are now lumped together as mere delivery systems for a single nutrient. Notice too how the new language exonerates the foods themselves. Now the culprit is an obscure, invisible, tasteless—and politically unconnected—substance that may or may not lurk in them called saturated fat.

This demonstrates how that alienation is cultivated by differentiating "nutrients" and foods like "beef," "chicken," and "fish." He also suggests a political motivation for developing this alienation. Disconnecting nutrients from foods allows industries to put layers of language between their products and consumers. And in that linguistic environment, suggesting that a food, like beef, may be unhealthy—as Oprah Winfrey found out in the '90s—is grounds for legal retribution. In another instance, branding foods—creating new words for a combination of nutrients (or lack thereof)—becomes another way of using language to obscure the relationship between "foods" and their ingredients. This leads Pollan to write in *Food Rules*, "It's not food if it's called by the same name in every language. (Think Big Mac, Cheetos, or Pringles.)"

Pollan is not only concerned with the way corporations and government entities use language to shape our food experiences. He is also interested in how language and humans are used in evolution to help some species and hurt others. In *The Botany of Desire*, he writes, "we're prone to overestimate our own agency in nature. Many of the activities humans like

to think they undertake for their own good purposes—inventing agriculture, outlawing certain plants, writing books in praise of others—are mere contingencies as far as nature is concerned." Writing books in praise of certain plants and writing laws outlawing other plants, for example, is a way of using language to help a species evolve, mutate, or die off. But who's using who here? Pollan writes, "Our grammar might teach us to divide the world into active subjects and passive objects, but in a coevolutionary relationship every subject is also an object, every object a subject." Our grammar, for Pollan, shapes the way we relate to the natural world. "That's why it makes just as much sense to think of agriculture as something the grasses did to people as a way to conquer the trees." Perhaps writing is something certain plants, animals, and microbes do to us or through us. Perhaps the "us" here is at issue. In the genre Pollan, language connects more than humans.

Pollan writes about language in many senses. For example, in *Cooked*, Pollan writes about the two browning reactions, the Maillard reaction and caramelization, and how these reactions develop in meats certain flavor compounds that are found in the vegetable kingdom. He writes that "flavor notes that we think of as nutty, green, earthy, vegetal, floral, and fruity" also develop in meat as it browns. He refers to these flavor notes as "this particular canon of scents," scents that "move us." Sometimes, these scents literally move us as we follow our noses toward the smell of roasting coffee or barbecuing meat or baking bread. Pollan writes:

> [T]his particular group of aromatic compounds amounts to a kind of universal interspecies language, one of the principal systems of communication between plants and animals. Already familiar, those plant

> scents and flavors were precisely the ones you did well to pay attention to, since they could direct you to good things to eat and away from bad.

Plants, when they are ready to move, beckon to us in this language, and we answer the call, do their bidding, transport their pollen and seeds."When their seeds are ready for transport, plants summon mammals with the strong scents and tastes of ripe fruit, a sensory language to which we have become particularly sensitive, since it alerts us to the presence of food energy—sugars—and other plant chemicals we need, like vitamin C."

From the deploying of trendy foods to the "Supermarket Pastoral" language of Whole Foods Market to the way corporate "language exonerates the foods" to "universal interspecies language" to a "particular canon of scents" to a "sensory language" to a "coevolutionary relationship" where "every subject is also an object, every object a subject" Pollan, everywhere in the genre, (suf)fuses the "natural" environment with language. It becomes a convention of the genre to point out how language operates on and between all these "natural" and "cultural" levels, making boundaries between the two permeable.

Positive Portrayals of Pastoral Places

Pollan's notion of place is, in a word, "pastoral," and references to the pastoral are conventional in the genre. I mean that not only in the sense that Pollan visits and writes about pastures and what pass for pastures. He ruminates on what counts as pasture and what counts as pastoral. He has extended conversations about best practices in pasturing with celebrity farmer Joel Salatin. Pastures make up much of the substance of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, but, "pastoral" is also significant insofar as it describes the agrarian ideals spread throughout his work. It sums up how he seems to long for a return to a pre-industrial-

agriculture era in which monocultures do not dominate the foodscape. If there is a phrase to explain what Pollan means by "well-managed pasture," it might be this: "a polyculture of grass, with its wide diversity of photosynthesizers exploiting every inch of land as well as every moment of growing season." Arguably, these are the same lenses that Whole Foods Market uses when trying to sell organic milk. But it is a matter of scale. Whole Foods must still buy from huge supply chains, and the compromises that come with scale seem to bother Pollan:

> Of course the trickiest contradiction Whole Foods attempts to reconcile is the one between the industrialization of the organic food industry of which it is a part, and the pastoral ideals on which that industry has been built. The organic movement, as it was once called, has come a remarkably long way in the last thirty years, to the point where it now looks considerably less like a movement than a big business.

Even if Whole Foods Market fails to reconcile the contradictions of industrial "organic" foods and pastoral ideals in a way that Pollan finds palatable, navigating the grocery store with the tools of critical theory allows him to recognize the trickiness of the contradictions. He spends the rest of the book reveling in and attempting to reconcile these contradictions. By the end of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan has retreated all the way into the forest with just a few folks to hunt wild boar and forage for mushrooms to construct his perfect meal. But that meal—"the perfect meal...that's been fully paid for, that leaves no debt outstanding" he concludes, "is almost impossible ever to do." He writes, "there was nothing very realistic or applicable about this meal...But as a sometimes thing, as a kind of ritual, a meal that is eaten in full consciousness of what it took to make it is worth preparing every now and again."

Every dream has a nightmare equivalent, and Pollan's anti-pastoral dystopian landscapes are just as significant in establishing this place-based convention as the idyllic pastures themselves. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan mentions several times the "nowhere" of commodity beef and corn farming. *In The Botany of Desire*, he mentions "Nowhere, Idaho" in relation to the industrial potato farming. That "nowhere" is not actually nowhere; it is just what Pollan—who writes for *The New York Times* on the East Coast and teaches at Berkeley on the West Coast—characterizes as something akin to flyover country. This is the duality created by idyllic places; there are a lot of places in the world that look like nowhere in comparison. Pollan's nowhere is not a vast desert, ocean, or native prairie. For him, "nowhere" is the industrial landscape, a place you would not want to be if you didn't have to be. "Nowhere" is the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO). "Nowhere" is made up of the non-places that Marc Augé refers to in *Non-Places* (101). CAFOs are Augé's places of "contractual relations" where inhabitants are "users" of the place, or used by the place, but never residents. Non-places are non-relational constructions that animals are moved through. As in an airport, everyone around a CAFO participates in the system of confining, moving, feeding, excreting, and expelling the passengers. This view of non-places, as Jeff Rice points out in *Digital Detroit*, is limited (8). Non-places only look non-relational from one angle. With a *Koyaanisqatsi*-like *mise en scène*, everything looks very un-pastoral, like a non-place. But stylistic choices can transform these non-places into places. Richard Linklater's film *Fast Food Nation,* shows the placeness, albeit mostly unpleasant, of a meatpacking town by recreating all sorts of relationships in and around the meatpacking plant. Whereas Pollan seems to want to fly over the the meatpacking plants and CAFOs, Linklater and Eric Schlosser (who co-wrote the script for *Fast Food Nation*) dwell on relationships there:

relationships among extended families that have been in the town for generations, relationships among extended families that recently immigrated to the town, relationships between ranchers and fast food restaurants, relationships between the fast food chains and its workers, relationships between supervisors and workers at he meatpacking plant, relationships between the workers and the animals they slaughter. Pollan and Linklater and Schlosser are not that far apart ideologically, but the film *Fast Food Nation* reminds the audience that a meatpacking plant is a place, too. Seen from one angle, it is the middle of nowhere. Seen from another, it is a workplace that provides jobs for real people in a real town.

Between the dystopian food industry and the ideal, personally foraged meal is the exemplar for Pollan of the American pastoral meal, which is in some ways more perfect than the foraged meal because it is actually regularly obtainable. The pastoral meal is, in part, what spawned the locavore movement. Although the ethics of locavore eating have been thoroughly problematized, local foodstuffs still have cachet; from a global perspective, locally sourced foods may not be doing much for the environment, but they undoubtably help local economies. The American pastoral meal is the great compromise, eaten and enjoyed within view of the ideal. But at the heart of this ideal is a tension between resistance to the cold logic of specialization that comes with industrialization and acceptance of the idea that industrialization is the only way to spread the pastoral ideal far enough to make a difference. Given the impracticality of the perfect meal, local, diversified, profitable farms are the new dream. As Pollan expresses it in *The Omnivore's Dilemma,* "A farmer dependent on a local market will, perforce, need to grow a wide variety of things rather than specialize in the one or two plants or animals that the national market (organic or otherwise) would ask from

him." This is a good thing precisely because it is not monoculture, "the original sin from which almost every other problem of our food system flows." The convention here is to celebrate local and pastoral polycultures while demonizing centralized factory farm monocultures.

Portrayals of pastoral places is recognizable as a convention because of the way that agricultural operations (and food producers and restaurants) are repeatedly characterized as bad whenever they scale to a level that might not be considered pastoral. In *The Botany of Desire*, Pollan writes, "Organic farmers like Mike Heath have turned their backs on what is unquestionably the greatest strength—and still greater weakness—of industrial agriculture: monoculture and the economies of scale it makes possible." Pollan sets up monoculture as something that goes against nature: "Monoculture is the single most powerful simplification of modern agriculture, the key move in reconfiguring nature as a machine, yet nothing else in agriculture is so poorly fitted to the way nature seems to work." He cites vulnerability to insects, weeds, and disease as some of the negative outcomes of monoculture. "Monoculture is at the root of virtually every problem that bedevils the modern farmer, and from which virtually every agricultural product is designed to deliver him."

In every book, we can find evidence of this pastoral convention. Take, for example, Pollan's writing in *In Defense of Food*:

> Most of my suggestions come down to strategies for escaping the Western diet, but before the resurgence of farmers' markets, the rise of the organic movement, and the renaissance of local agriculture now under way across the country, stepping outside the conventional food system simply was not a realistic option for most people. Now it is. We are entering a postindustrial

> era of food; for the first time in a generation it is possible to leave behind the Western diet without having also to leave behind civilization.

The good key words of this convention are "local," "postindustrial," "farmers markets," and "organic." The bad keywords are "conventional" "industrial" "Western." They pop up again in *In Defense of Food*:

> Indeed, the surest way to escape the Western diet is simply to depart the realms it rules: the supermarket, the convenience store, and the fast-food outlet. It is hard to eat badly from the farmers' market, from a CSA box...or from your garden...But buying as much as you can from the farmers' market, or directly from the farm when that's an option, is a simple act with a host of profound consequences for your health as well as for the health of the food chain you've now joined.

In *Cooked* Pollan writes of not just local farmers, but also local millers. Again, notice the keyword "local":

> The last encouraging fact was scattered evidence that a local whole-grain economy might also be stirring here and there. New grain farmers and millers were popping up in New England and the Pacific Northwest and even in my own backyard, part of the national movement to supply a growing demand for local food.

You can even see Pollan's pastoral conventions show up in *Food Rules* where he writes, "eat food that is both organic and local" and "Buy your snacks at the farmers' market." The whole idea behind local eating and shorter, traceable food chains is to get the eater closer to the pastoral. The idea is that the further you get from where your food is grown, the less

virtue it has. But this is a recent and contradictory convention in food discourse. We can still see spaces in the foodscape where foods that have traveled far are exotic and enticing because they came from far away or from a special region. (Think of Dijon or Champaign or caviar.) Privileging the pastoral lent momentum to the locavore movement, but it is important to point out that it is, in the genre Pollan, a repeated expression of values, not an unquestionable virtue.

Expressions of Epicurean Ethics

In 2009, a writer for *The New York Times* dubbed Pollan "the ethical epicurean and locavore champion" (Dargis). Curiously, Pollan never cites or quotes Epicurus, despite the fact that he frequently writes about pleasure and philosophy. Developing a link between Epicurus and Pollan, as I hint toward here, might provide a productive direction for those seeking to understand the genealogy of Pollan's philosophy. For now, suffice it to say that a qualified Epicureanism—perhaps not Epicurus' entire ontology, but at least his commitment to pleasure as a relational virtue—emerges early and often in Pollan's work. Expressions of Epicurean ethics, centered on the word "pleasure" constitute a genre convention. Across his books, he mentions "pleasure" more than 120 times. He mentions pleasure 27 times in his first book, *Second Nature,* and perhaps no quote sums up his take on pleasure better than this:

> No time now for summer's idle puttering, there's real work to be done in the garden. Harvesting is the least of it, if still the best. Now's also the time to dig new beds, plant trees and shrubs, spread compost, rake leaves, plant cover crops. Summer's work fingers and secateurs can handle; autumn's wants

> spades and forks, the commitment of arms and backs. And the weather obliges, with cool, brittle days on which it is a pleasure to sweat.

Non-mandatory hard work on a cool fall day is the kind of pleasure that both Pollan and Epicurus might agree is an ethical kind of pleasure. Another example comes from *A Place of My Own*, in which Pollan writes that he "found reading—reading almost anything—to be a vaguely sensual, slightly indulgent pleasure, and one that had very little to do with the acquisition of information." He explains how words and place are utterly enmeshed. "Rather than a means to an end, the deep piles of words on the page comprised for me a kind of soothing environment, a plush cushion into which sometimes I could barely wait to sink my head." Pollan's expression of pleasure here fits with Epicurean views of mental pleasure and soothing states of mind. In *Epicureanism,* Tim O'Keefe writes that, for Epicureans, "mental pleasures are greater than physical pleasures" and "the highest sort of pleasure is tranquillity, freedom from fear and anxiety."

It is not so much the experience of physical or mental pleasure that is a genre convention in Pollan's work. Rather, it is the expression of pleasure that becomes conventional through repetition of the word. So far, we've talked about pleasure in terms of the garden and the study, but the same kind of pleasure is expressed by Pollan at the table and in the kitchen. In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, he writes, "in the end this is a book about the pleasures of eating, the kinds of pleasure that are only deepened by knowing." He compares a trip to McDonald's with a meal in which he foraged for all the ingredients himself. He writes, "The two meals stand at the far extreme ends of the spectrum of human eating...The pleasures of the one are based on a nearly perfect knowledge; the pleasures of the other on an equally perfect ignorance." Pleasure here is a tricky compass. Sometimes we might,

according to Pollan, take pleasure in McDonald's fries. In *The Botany of Desire,* he writes, "Part of the pleasure those fries gave me was how perfectly they conformed to my image and expectation of them—to the Idea of Fries in my head, that is, an idea that McDonald's has successfully planted in the heads of a few billion other people around the world." But that pleasure is only fully possible in the "perfect ignorance" of the "farm," located in the Pacific Northwest, made up of more than 150 crop circles that are visible from space. After Pollan found out about those crop circles, he took pleasure in walking away from giant corporate food. In *Cooked*, Pollan writes, "To cook for the pleasure of it, to devote a portion of our leisure to it, is to declare our independence from the corporations seeking to organize our every waking moment into yet another occasion for consumption." Again, we see an expression of pleasure about doing non-mandatory work. There is an ethical claim being made here, too, that choosing to cook will free us from corporations and that freedom is a virtue. From an Epicurean perspective, this is sound, as corporations need us to want more, and wanting more runs counter to Epicurean philosophy. Even the folksy prescriptions in *Food Rules* have Epicurean subtexts to them. In "The banquet is in the first bite," Pollan explains:

> Taking this adage to heart will help you enjoy your food and eat more slowly. No other bite will taste as good as the first, and every subsequent bite will progressively diminish in satisfaction. Economists call this the law of diminishing marginal utility, and it argues for savoring the first few bites and stopping sooner than you otherwise might. For as you go on, you'll be getting more calories, but not necessarily more pleasure.

He makes a similar point in *In Defense of Food,* when he writes:

> To eat slowly, then, also means to eat deliberately, in the original sense of that word: 'from freedom' instead of compulsion. Many food cultures, particularly those at less of a remove from the land than ours, have rituals to encourage this sort of eating, such as offering a blessing over the food or saying grace before the meal. The point, it seems to me, is to make sure that we don't eat thoughtlessly or hurriedly, and that knowledge and gratitude will inflect our pleasure at the table.

Pollan gets almost religious about pleasure as he concludes *In Defense of Food* with this invocation:

> I don't ordinarily offer any special words before a meal, but I do sometimes recall a couple of sentences written by Wendell Berry, which do a good job of getting me to eat more deliberately: 'Eating with the fullest pleasure—pleasure, that is, that does not depend on ignorance—is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world. In this pleasure we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude, for we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend.' Words such as these are one good way to foster a more deliberate kind of eating..."

Finally, of course, there is the Epicurean exaltation of friendship. O'Keefe points out that "Epicurus praises friendship in extravagant terms, calling it an 'immortal good' (SV 78), which 'dances round the world announcing to us all that we should wake to blessedness' (SV 52). This is because friendship is by far the greatest thing for making our whole life blessed (KD 27)." Pollan might agree, as he writes in *Cooked*, "This, it seems to me, is one of the

greatest pleasures of doing this wholly unnecessary work [of fermenting foods]: the spontaneous communities that spring up and gather around it. Fermentos, I found, are uncommonly generous with their knowledge and recipes and starter cultures."

In his *Principle Doctrines*, Epicurus writes, "It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living pleasantly." For Epicurus, wisdom and pleasure regulate one another. Without wisdom, even a just, well-lived life is not pleasant: "Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the person is not able to live wisely, though he lives well and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life." This kind of wisdom has become conventional in the genre Pollan as well. There is a quest to establish an infrastructure of pleasure that will order life the way the infrastructure of the garden orders nature. Although not explicit, an Epicurean ethics—one that weaves together the pleasant, the wise, the well, and the just with friendship and the goal of tranquility on earth—can be seen as the conventional ethic of the genre. It does not take much to reconcile the relationship between Pollan's pastoral and affinity for the community of the farmers market with the Epicurean virtues of tranquility and friendship.

Critiques of the Genre Pollan

When considering what makes Pollan a genre, we can look at all the conventions outlined above and create a fairly precise outline for how to write in the genre. Take food as your subject matter; write from a first-person perspective; carefully craft your writing with attention to ways that the elements of a book fit together; employ a personal speculative methodology that positions you as the student; demonstrate the interconnectedness of

nature and culture; sprinkle in dashes of philosophy to cultivate an intellectual style, but publish in the popular press; emphasize the role of language in the construction and perception of natural phenomena; express a preference for all things pastoral; base your ethics on pleasure and tranquility. These conventions are rather broad when outlined this way, but as I have demonstrated, each is made up of individual generic elements expressed in specific places in the books. But I also propose the idea that there are subtextual conventions that are part of the genre as well. Genre conventions are not only evident in texts, as outlined above. They also exist in the reception of the texts. Gunn writes that genres reside in the minds of an audience and they are encoded there through repetition of conventions (6). But there are many ways to interpret genre conventions and repeated interpretations—or even misinterpretations—of genre conventions can alter the reception of the work. Because of this, critiques of Pollan can be seen as co-constitutive of the genre through their positing of genre conventions implied by subtextual elements. Below, I outline four critiques of the genre Pollan that alter the reception of the genre, namely that it: is elitist; is condescending; limits notions of subjectivity to rational, individual choice; and is regressively normative. I should hasten to point out that I do not necessarily agree with these critiques of Pollan. I also do not find them wholly consistent with the conventions I've outlined above. But I point them out to demonstrate how genres can be codified through dismissal, resistance, and other forms of social counteraction.

Elitism

Some argue that the genre contains an inherent elitism. But if the genre includes traces of elitism, it is as least a self-aware kind of elitism. Pollan answers the elitist critique

pretty directly in an interview by Sarah Henry in *Nosh*. Henry asks, "Some of our readers view you as an elitist foodie and roll their eyes at such stories as your *New York Times Magazine* piece, 'The 36-Hour Dinner Party.' Is that unfair?" Pollan responds:

> I reject that characterization while I'm sensitive to the fact that not everybody has access to good food. I appreciate that food and class are intimately tied: that story is set in Napa, which implies a lot of leisure in certain circles. But I don't think Americans should be afraid of aestheticism; as a culture sometimes we can have an aversion to pleasure.

Pollan recognizes in the *Nosh* article that "To eat healthily in this country...costs more than it does to eat poorly," but, he says, "That situation is a public policy problem. We need farm policies that will correct this imbalance, so that healthy calories can compete with unhealthy ones." The cost of food, Pollan suggests, should be addressed at the policy level. More important to his overall philosophy, however, is the role of pleasure in governing individual choices. In Pollan's world, the pleasures of eating are distinct from gluttony and convenient solutions like industrially prepared foods. Pollan's pleasure is a slow balance of work and play that he constructs throughout his books. If there is something elitist about Pollan's work, it is the implication that his readers have, or aspire to, the same level of leisure that he does, and that they would use it to pursue the same kinds of productive pleasures that he does: gardening, foraging mushrooms, baking bread. But charges of elitism, even if they stick, only invalidate some of Pollan's arguments some of the time on the grounds that some of his advice is only feasible, practical, or advisable for a particular subset of his audience.

The Dupe

The most sustained critique of Pollan comes from an article titled "Can't Stomach It: How Michael Pollan et al. Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos," by Julie Guthman. The article first appeared in *Gastronomica* in 2007 and was reprinted in *The Utne Reader* in 2008 and again in *Gastronomica* in 2013. The article critiques some of Pollan's assumptions, as well as his tone, and Guthman lumps him in with a motley crew of contemporaries that includes Jane Goodall, Marion Nestle, and Morgan Spurlock. This is no surprise; Pollan has been labeled a Berkeley elitist with the likes of Alice Waters for a long time (Philpott). None of these associations really seem to tarnish Pollan. Instead, the "et al." speaks to the urge to define a genre with the proper name of an individual. And this is an important point. Despite calling Pollan out by name, Guthman's critique is no personal hatchet job. (She does critique him much more harshly in "Commentary on teaching food: Why I am fed up with Michael Pollan et al." in the journal *Agriculture and Human Values*.) She is not really writing about Pollan the man. Guthman mentions how "Pollan's excellent writing makes for a compelling story" (76) and writes that his "critique of the cost-cutting measures of the fast food giants, the nutritional impoverishment of processed food, and an agricultural subsidy system that encourages ecologically problematic monocropping, horrendous animal husbandry practices, and food-dumping in the name of 'aid'... is spot on" (76). But Guthman detects a potentially dangerous objectification of obese people and a fair amount of condescension in Pollan's work. She writes "in evoking obesity, Pollan turns our gaze, perhaps inadvertently, from an ethically suspect farm policy to the fat body." She writes, "swipes at obesity, especially coming from those who themselves have never been subject to such scrutiny or objectification, or the pain and frustration of weight loss, strikes me as naïve" (77). She notes that "entirely absent from the pages of the recent popular books is any authorial

reflection on how obesity talk further stigmatizes those who are fat, or on how this social scolding might actually work at cross-purposes to health and well being" (77). Not all of Guthman's critiques are equal. For example, it is true that Pollan appears to never have been obese, but it is the claim that he has never been subject to comparable scrutiny or objectification that does not have much force behind it. Even if we buy such a claim based on the premise that white, male, first-world, wealthy, thin, and healthy people like Pollan are subject to less scrutiny and objectification, then we would have to objectify and scrutinize Pollan to support such a claim, and any evidence we could glean would be superficial at best.

More persuasive is Guthman's explication of the figure of the dupe she sees in Pollan's work. She writes, "there is something even more disturbing about these books and the claims they reproduce. To repeat Pollan's claim: 'When food is abundant and cheap, people will eat more of it and get fat.' People eat corn because it's there. They are dupes" (78).[9] Pollan, critics like Guthman claim, creates this implicit character in his audience, a victim of deception. The victim, then, must have a perpetrator. In the genre Pollan, the perp is big, corporate food. I'm tempted to say Pollan's construction is accurate. The dupe critique requires a con man, a Voltron of the collective forces whose growth depends on deceiving us about our food. Read just the slightest bit of news about ADM, Kraft, Monsanto, Nestlé, McDonald's, Yum! Brands, and the like, and you get a glimpse into just how real this boogeyman is. These networks are connected and they coordinate, even as

[9] See also "The Political Economy of Obesity" by Alice P. Julier in *Food and Culture.*

they fight for and entice consumers.[10] But in Guthman's reading of Pollan, corporations have all the power, and dupes must shed their ignorance through education and exercise their power through resistance, self-restraint, and alternative food chains. However, this kind of resistance and restraint, not to mention seeking alternative sources of food, can be exhausting. Guthman writes, "If junk food is so ubiquitous that it cannot be resisted, how is it that some people remain (or become) thin? It appears, unfortunately, that [writers like Pollan] see themselves as morally superior to fat people in the sense that they characterize fat people as being short of subjectivity" (78). Guthman's dupe argument is most persuasive around the topic of subjectivity. Reducing capability to education and resistance is an oversimplification of agency.

Alternative Subjectivities

To flesh out some alternatives to Guthman's perception of Pollan's style of subjectivity, we might look at concept of lateral agency. According to Jenny Rice in an illustrated piece titled "(Un)Lovable Food" in *PRE/TEXT*, when it comes to food, cooking, and feeding, we individuals do not always exercise agency in ways that are singular, lovable. Rice cites Lauren Berlant's "Slow Death" to amplify the idea of lateral agency. When we engage in the "chain, the generic, and the non-locatable food experience" we often know

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[10] In an article from *The New York Times*, Michael Moss describes the collective force, and ability to organize that comes from this industry: "On the evening of April 8, 1999, a long line of Town Cars and taxis pulled up to the Minneapolis headquarters of Pillsbury and discharged 11 men who controlled America's largest food companies. Nestlé was in attendance, as were Kraft and Nabisco, General Mills and Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Mars. Rivals any other day, the C.E.O.'s and company presidents had come together for a rare, private meeting. On the agenda was one item: the emerging obesity epidemic and how to deal with it. While the atmosphere was cordial, the men assembled were hardly friends. Their stature was defined by their skill in fighting one another for what they called 'stomach share'—the amount of digestive space that any one company's brand can grab from the competition."

that it is not good for us. Rice writes, "Eating fast food and other processed convenience foods is a knock to our bodily health. (And yet we do it anyway.) Is this act some loss of agency? It would seem so. But Berlant tells us that such slow deaths are 'a kind of interruptive agency'..." (44). Berlant writes that food is one place where we exercise our individual agency, "food is one of the few spaces of controllable, reliable pleasure people have. Additionally, unlike alcohol or other drugs, it is necessary to existence, part of the care of the self, the reproduction of life" (778). But she wonders how we situate the necessity and pleasure of food amid the grind of capitalist life (778). On the one hand, we have to eat, so we just do it and get back to work. (Food, here, is fuel.) On the other hand, food can be pleasurable. Seen from the pleasurable side, "the body and a life" can be seen as "sites of episodic intermission from personality" or sites of "small vacations from the will" (778). Our will is "so often spent from the pressures of coordinating one's pacing with the pace of the working day," Berlant writes. And eating can be a chance to exercise our lateral agency, our break from our will. And, I might add, fast food companies know and exploit this. That's why they have run ads for decades telling us that we "deserve a break today" (Skid). But taking a vacation from the will is not the same as being a dupe or a victim, exploited by an evil corporation. It is the exercise of a different kind of agency. Berlant reminds us that "[i]mpassivity and other relations of alienation, coolness, detachment, or distraction, especially in subordinated populations, are affective forms of engagement with the environment of slow death" (779). She argues that capitalism grinds subjects down and reduces survival to slow death, but also that full-time resistance is exhausting and not sustainable. Sometimes we need to spend some time "coasting" and "floating sideways" (779).

This kind of lateral agency is not mentioned very often in the long American tradition of using food to talk about social issues, a tradition in which the genre Pollan participates. In this tradition of using food to talk about social issues, framing the discussion in terms of individual choice can be problematic. This is what prompts Charlotte Biltekoff to ask in an online video "When we talk about food and health, what else are we talking about?" In the video, Biltekoff says:

> So now we are worried about things like Hot Cheetos and too much sodas and too much processed food. So the concern about exactly what people, poor people in particular, are eating has changed, but the idea that poor people's diets are a social danger and that there are reasons why the middle and upper middle class should be interested in improving those diets has remained the same. And the impulse to focus on diet as a way to address larger social problems has also remained consistent. (De Michiel)

Framing social problems as matters of individual choice is a form of social control. The danger in this method of social control is, according to Biltekoff, that "the targets of dietary reform...have felt very judged and have oftentimes been quite resistant to being told that their food's not good and not healthy by...middle class, upper-middle-class dietary reformers" (De Michiel). Kale, again, is symbolic here. Biltekoff says, "When we talk about my perfect kale smoothie versus your trip through the McDondald's drive-through...we are not just talking about food. We are inevitably talking about social values, ideas about what it is to be a good person" (De Michiel). Biltekoff says the "distinction between good and bad eaters is always fraught with moral implications" and it is vital for us to build awareness about "the truths that are being constructed, the ideas that are being generated, the ideals,

the social ideals that are being conveyed through these conversations that are presumably just about food and health" (De Michiel). Biltekoff's goal, then is that of an "expanded consciousness" of how and why rhetorics of food are constructed. Regardless of Pollan's open mindedness or self-reflexiveness or ecological worldview, his perspective closes off certain possibilities. Individual agency, individual choice, and first-person narrative are all woven together in a way that limits the perspective and that limits the problems and solutions one can imagine from that perspective.

As Rice's, Berlant's, and Biltekoff's explanations of agency point out, even in individuals, choice is never about one simple thing. Individual choice is a mess of contradictions. There are many reasons why we might go to McDonald's one day and the farmers market the next. Pollan knows this. Read Pollan carefully and you can find responses to most critiques against him. He even acknowledges and indulges in a small vacation from the will when he eats at McDonald's in *Omnivore's Dilemma*. But when he starts to clarify things, to smooth over the contradictions, to lean on individual narratives as truth, the dupe appears. The clearer Pollan's prose gets, the stronger the image of the dupe becomes. However, here is the thing about the dupe: it exists in Pollan, too. He is writing—as his tradition of autodidactic writing suggests—to his inner dupe. He explains this in an article in *The Atlantic*:

> I stood in a potato field in Idaho, a 35,000-acre farm that was completely remote-controlled, with regular showers of pesticides so toxic that the farmer's didn't enter his fields. I had no idea that this was how we grew food. I was an Easterner—and farms in the east are tiny and still kinda cute. I realized—if I don't know this, lots of people don't know this. The way our

> food was being grown was being deliberately hidden from us in many cases. They don't make it easy to visit these feedlots. And much of my work grew out of a sense of shock at the picture that emerges when you do connect the dots. ("The Wendell Berry Sentence")

The idea that Pollan is writing to an inner dupe does not necessarily make the condescension that Guthman perceives disappear, but it does give us another way to interpret the texts.

Regressive Normativity

In reading Pollan, one can see that there is a structure to pleasure. In *Eating Right In America*, Biltekoff writes that Pollan's work "foregrounded and linked pleasure and ethics" (89) and this emphasis on pleasure freed people to enjoy the omnivore's dilemma rather than be paralyzed, intimidated, or bored by it. She writes:

> While the idea of eating for pleasure may have seemed to liberate people from the binding self-denial of scientific nutrition, this approach to eating right replaced the quantifiable norms of other reform movements with qualitative ones that were no less normative. But because these dietary details included a mandate to enjoy a good diet, the internal landscape of preference, taste, and pleasure now fell under the purview dietary reform. Being a good eater within this new set of ideals required that individuals reform not only their behaviors, but also their desires. (89)

However, as Biltekoff notes, the foregrounding of pleasure does not equal a liberation from norms; Pollan's new rules require people to follow new norms (or return to old ones), retrain their appetites, and establish new diets. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*,

Michel Foucault writes about diet in terms of behavioral control. He writes, "it is clear that 'diet' itself—regimen—was a fundamental category through which human behavior could be conceptualized. It characterized the way in which one managed one's existence, and it enabled a set of rules to be affixed to conduct." He writes, "Regimen was a whole art of living," and "a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body. A concern that permeated everyday life, making the major or common activities of existence a matter both of health and of ethics." Everyday life, even when governed by a pleasure-based philosophy, is structured around ethics and norms.

The norms—established by Pollan's Epicurean ethics—are not just part of his genre; they constitute the subtext of his genre. Forms and norms are formative and normative. An example of these forms and norms at work comes in the acknowledgements of *Cooked,* where he writes about the relationship between dinner and his family dynamics:

> The period of our lives that *Cooked* covers happened to coincide with Isaac's leaving home for college, and so with the end of our regular family dinner. If I have romanticized that institution in these pages, it is because it has been so very sweet in our lives, not always, but certainly in the last few years, when the three of us could share the work in the kitchen and then reap the pleasure at the table. Thanks for every one of those meals.

Although sometimes—as in the passage above and in *Cooked*—Pollan's principles are rather normative, we can also read them as locations of deliberation, rehashed over generations. Some will see Pollan's call to return to cooking the nightly family dinner as nostalgic at best and sexist at worst (Philpott). Some will go along with his claim that the "family meal is the

nursery of democracy" (Johnson). Others will claim that although the pleasure he experiences at *his* table results from equitably shared work in his family, women still do the bulk of kitchen work in the culture at large. Indeed, a spate of articles circulated in the fall of 2014 that reacted to Pollan's norm, deliberated how dinner is gendered (Heffernan, Ruhlman), whether it is worth it (Marcotte), whether it is an attainable ideal (Harper), whether the breadwinner should be exempt from cooking (Cope), and whether food writers should be trusted to paint a picture of what dinners should look like (Koenig). Many of the popular articles focused on scholarship in the food issue of the journal *Contexts* (Kliff). The article, "The Joy of Cooking?" by Sarah Bowen, Sinikka Elliott, and Joslyn Brenton, cites Pollan and counter-argues that "time pressures, tradeoffs to save money, and the burden of pleasing others make it difficult for mothers to enact the idealized vision of home-cooked meals advocated by foodies." Even if Pollan does not single out women as the primary feeders, women still feel the burden of cultivating pleasure.

Pollan, for his part, pre-empts some of these arguments in *Cooked*. He writes, "Women have traditionally done most of the household food work, so to defend cooking is automatically to defend those roles. But by now it should be possible to make a case for the importance of cooking without defending the traditional division of domestic labor." In fact, he writes, arguments about the importance of cooking must challenge domestic traditions. "Indeed, that argument will probably get nowhere unless it challenges the traditional arrangements of domesticity—and assumes a prominent role for men in the kitchen, as well as children." In addition to calling for challenges to traditional domestic arrangements, Pollan also recognizes how his position in the debate is gendered. He writes, "[f]or a man to criticize these developments will perhaps rankle some readers. To certain

ears, whenever a man talks about the importance of cooking, it sounds like he wants to turn back the clock, and return women to the kitchen." However, rather than backing off his home cooking argument because of his situated ethos, he doubles down on the new norm. Returning to old gender roles is, he writes, "not at all what I have in mind. I've come to think cooking is too important to be left to any one gender or member of the family; men and children both need to be in the kitchen, too, and not just for reasons of fairness or equity but because they have so much to gain by being there." The ideal of family dinner outlined and debated here is an instantiation of the way rhetorical forms are transmitted and transformed through genres. The ideal is seen in a rhetorical form repeated by Pollan with a twist. In his version, everyone cooks dinner and derives pleasure from it. The ideal is repeated back to him with a critique that it is not an ideal attainable by all. He repeats the ideal back to critics with an acknowledgement of the repetition and the inequities, but repeats himself again. Can we now make a case for cooking if we package it with pleasure and the insistence that men and children help out? There are still repetitions left to be made here; for example, Pollan's current version of "family dinner" still assumes a normative nuclear "family." Even as some beliefs, attitudes, and values are negotiated in the genre, others are transmitted unchanged. Even as broadly construed as we can imagine, "family" is not a stable thing. The problem with making the family the center of eating is that it leaves out the single urbanite for whom cooking is not practical. It leaves out the elderly for whom cooking is perhaps physically difficult. It leaves out astronauts eating space food, prisoners eating prison food, and military troops eating MREs. As Biltekoff has argued, we are not just romanticizing certain ways of eating, we are also romanticizing ways of being.

The Genre Pollan as Social Action

There are other arguments against Pollan, too: That he romanticizes the family meal (Bowen); that his claims about the evils of processed food are "science-free" (Freedman), and that he is dismissive of writers with whom he disagrees (Fitts). But even if critics disagree with Pollan or want to discount his arguments because of elitism or condescension, they still must reckon with him. At present, he sets the agenda for national food discourse. It is not only that the genre conventions established above create styles and commonplaces in food writing, but also that Pollan's method offers a way to live. We might say, along with David M. Grant, that Pollan provides an experiential interface. Grant writes:

> We might even say that Pollan traces for us an eco-electracy, a way in which we interface with the world. Through the presentations not just of four meals, but a detailed examination of where they come from, where they pass to, and what they leave behind, Pollan expands upon a quote he uses from Wendell Berry, 'Eating is an agricultural act' (11), to which Pollan also adds ecological and political. (89)

Grant combines Pollan's work with Gregory Ulmer's concept of "electracy" with agricultural, political, and ecological concerns. In saying that Pollan provides an interface with the world, Grant is arguing that Pollan has created a way of relating to our foods that involves tracing their origins, examining the places from which they come, examining their supply chains, reading their nutrition labels, decoding their marketing, reveling in their pleasure. These activities, then, structure our realities. Foss writes that "[t]he rhetorical forms that constitute genres not only structure the meanings of a particular social reality, but they also reflect beliefs, attitudes, and values and thus arise out of that reality" (226). The norms

of the genre Pollan arise out of and help create specific realities. It is this recursive, co-constitutive, mimetic process out of which this new genre emerges.

Genre criticism has allowed us to chart the conventions in Pollan's rhetoric of food. It has allowed us to show how these conventions circulate in corporate situations, as with Chipotle and Whole Foods Market, and in disciplinary situations in rhetoric and composition. Further research might look at specific examples of these conventions in works by other food writers. We might also examine how these conventions have lead to commonplaces that further shape the rhetoric of food. For example, the genre's first-person perspective might emphasize a micropolitics in which foraging, buying local, and "reading" the food chain become not only social action, but topics of political rhetoric. But we must also consider the possibility that the genre we have been creating will come apart. Genres are temporary structures. And genre is—as genres are—protean. As our beliefs, attitudes, and values are rereflected, reconstituted, and renegotiated, our concepts of genre change, too. Genres are flexible because they represent beliefs, attitudes, and values that are always shifting even as they appear stable. But genre is also always being re-envisioned, as Jacques Derrida does in "The Law of Genre." Derrida writes, "it comes as no surprise that, in nature and art, genre, a concept that is essentially classificatory and genealogico-taxonomic, itself engenders so many classificatory vertigines when it goes about classifying itself and situating the classificatory principle or instrument within a set" (61). That is, the "classificatory principle" employed by genre also subjects genre to classification. But, as Derrida writes, this brings the whole enterprise into question. "As with the class itself, the principle of genre is unclassifiable; it tolls the knell of the knell (glas), in other words, of classicum, of what permits one to call out (calare) orders and to order the manifold within a

nomenclature" (61). There is no one thing that permits us to order. Order, classification, and genre are socially negotiated.

We also must consider the possibility that Pollan's texts themselves, manifold as they are, will break apart the genre. Returning to the concept of pleasure, we can see Pollan's oeuvre as a Barthian text rather than a genre. In a Barthian reading, the text undoes any structures we might craft to contain it. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes writes, "First, the text liquidates all metalanguage, whereby it is text: no voice (Science, Cause, Institution) is behind what it is saying. Next, the text destroys utterly, to the point of contradiction, its own discursive category, its sociolinguistic reference (its 'genre')" (30). Pollan is, perhaps, first and foremost a writer of writerly texts and, as Barthes writes in *S/Z,* "There may be nothing to say about writerly texts" (4). Barthes writes, "the writerly text is not a thing, we would have a hard time finding it in a bookstore. Further, its model being a productive (and no longer a representative) one, it demolishes any criticism which, once produced, would mix with it" (5). Writerly writing is the process, "ourselves writing." Writing for one another. Pollan uses words to give terse dietary advice. He also uses words to examine the complexity of coevolution and how it affects what we eat. He buys industrial organic kale at Whole Foods Market and grows his own greens. He makes his own sauerkraut, but he also eats at McDonald's (if only for research). He writes that we should eat "mostly plants" but hunts, kills, and eats wild boar and barbecues a whole hog. In *Omnivore's Dilemma*, he writes, "nature never puts all her eggs in one basket." A philosophy of pleasure is inherently full of contradictions. Living with contradiction is not an abdication or evasion of responsibility. It is a way of being with words that exposes their limits. In their introduction to the *PRE/TEXT* special issue on "Food Theory," Jenny Rice and Jeff Rice

write point out the contradictions inherent to food rhetorics in general and Pollan's writing specifically. They write, "Pollan cannot conclude that one way of eating is superior to the other; he cannot dismiss the industrial in favor of the small-scale farming operation or vice versa. Contradictions he discovers in personal habits, consumption, economics, and global scaling prevent him from doing so" (6). Rice and Rice write, "how do we reconcile the rhetoric of contradictions (imagined or real) found throughout the contemporary food movement sweeping across America?" Ultimately, they conclude, as perhaps Pollan would, that we do not have to reconcile the contradictions. We can revel in them. "Sometimes...contradictions are not a problem, but rather a source of pleasure," they write. "A contradiction, or a broader paralogic rhetoric, can confuse us, frustrate us, or even anger us as we try to make sense of food, but it can also be a productive force" (6). In "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject" Derrida riffs at length on the contradictions of what it means to eat well. He asks, "how for goodness sake should one eat well (bien manger)? And what does this imply? (114-5). "What is eating?" he asks (115). He exposes the limits of language in the discourse of eating well when he says, "The infinitely metonymical question on the subject of 'one must eat well' must be nourishing not only for me, for a 'self,' which, given its limits, would thus eat badly, it must be shared, as you might put it, and not only in language (115). The question to be shared in verbal and nonverbal rhetorics "is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal," he says (115). "'One must eat well' does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but learning and giving to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to eat" he says. We are, after all, all in this together. Derrida reminds us that "One never eats entirely on one's own: this constitutes the rule underlying the statement, 'One must eat well'" (115). If

there is any convention in the genre Pollan that is likely to persist, perhaps it is the examination of the ways in which we are all implicated in the foods we eat. Miller writes, "Genre refers to a conventional category of discourse based in large-scale typification of rhetorical action; as action, it acquires meaning from situation and from the social context in which that situation arose" (163). If there is a more permanent meaning in the genre Pollan, then perhaps it is in the action of describing the social contexts of our foods.

"Where have you disposed of their carcasses?
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations;
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?
I do not see any of it upon you to-day—or perhaps I am deceiv'd;"
I will run a furrow with my plough—I will press my spade through the sod,
and turn it up underneath;
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.
—Walt Whitman

Chapter Three
Kombucha Talk: The Compostmodern Micro(be)politics of Replication

Michael Pollan, in his most recent work *Cooked*, spent time studying with "fermentos" like kraut-chi maker Sandor Ellix Katz and cheesemaker Sister Noëlla Marcellino. Katz makes an extended appearance in Pollan's *Cooked*. Pollan wrote the foreword to Katz's book, *The Art of Fermentation*. In the foreword, Pollan writes:

> *The Art of Fermentation* is much more than a cookbook...Sure, it tells you how to do it, but much more important, it tells you what it means, and why an act as quotidian and practical as making your own sauerkraut represents nothing less than a way of engaging with the world. Or rather, with several different worlds, each nested inside the other: the invisible world of fungi and bacteria;

> the community in which you live; and the industrial food system that is undermining the health of our bodies and the land.

Pollan's exploration into the microbiome is evidence that, despite his first-person *Harper's* magazine style from the 1980s, even he is thinking beyond the human individual. If mainstream writers like Pollan are questioning the human, then perhaps posthumanism is continuing to pick up momentum. When Pollan writes that Katz's "attitude has something more behind it than [his] easygoing temperament in the kitchen," Pollan attempts to move beyond the individual to the social. When Pollan writes, "there is a politics at work here as well," he is most likely referring to Katz's politics and the politics of his human followers. But just who or what is the individual "Katz" and what are his followers? What are their politics? Katz himself suggests just how far we can extend agency in fermentation. In *The Art of Fermentation*, he writes that "fermentation is a natural phenomenon much broader than human culinary practices; cells in our bodies are capable of fermentation." Thus, he claims, "humans did not invent or create fermentation; it would be more accurate to state that fermentation created us." But it is not only our human cells that are engaged in this process. We are each an ecosystem. Katz writes, "the human body is host to an elaborate indigenous biota. Some geneticists argue that we are 'a composite of many species,' with a genetic landscape that encompasses not only the human genome but also those of our bacterial symbionts." In fact, not only are we composed of bacteria, we are outnumbered by them. Katz writes that "bacteria outnumber the cells containing our unique DNA by more than 10 to 1." He continues, "This is a miracle of coevolution—the bacteria that coexist with us in our bodies enable us to exist." The fact that we are more bacteria than human has become

something of a commonplace, especially in fermentation discourse. But the shifts in our identity resulting from the repetition of this fact are ongoing.

The fact that we are more bacteria than human is shifting the way we think of the concept of human. In a talk hosted by the Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene project, godmother of posthumanism Donna Haraway is frank about this. She says, "it has become literally unthinkable to do good work in any interesting field with the premises of...methodological individualism and human exceptionalism." What we are turning toward, according to Haraway, is an understanding that we are a "multi-species" and that we are "becoming-with." As she says, "to be a one at all, you must be a many, and it is not a metaphor." This shift in perspective signals potential for largescale shifts in the U.S. food system, but it also signals potential for significant shifts in rhetorical subjectivity. In a recent special issue of *Philosophy and Rhetoric* on "Extrahuman Rhetorical Relations: Addressing the Animal, the Object, the Dead, and the Divine," guest editors Diane Davis and Michelle Ballif explain their "aims to further a thinking of rhetoric beyond human symbol use" (348). They requested "pieces examining how 'the human' is produced through anahuman communications" (348). In an interview with Davis in that issue, Avital Ronell asks "What kinds of alterity already reside within the so-called human? What kind of contaminations and disruptors have found hospitality, and what runs already way beyond the way we tend to chart and map what constitutes even the neuroecology of the so-called human? (356)" In "Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living" Davis writes of a "rhetoricity" that "cannot be innate because it cannot not be relational: without an other, a trace of differentiation, there is no need or possibility for self-reference" (548). So who or what are these others that make our self-reference possible? Other "humans," for sure. But also

animals and microorganisms. We are defined not only socially, by one another, but also microbially, by the alterity that lives in, on, and around us.

It is not merely conceptually that microbes affect what we think of as the human. Our microbiota, it turns out, may also shape our behavior. Joe Alcock, associate professor of emergency medicine at the University of New Mexico Department of Emergency Medicine teaches courses in evolutionary medicine. He and co-authors Carlo C. Maley and C. Athena Aktipis published an essay in the journal *Bioessays* that reviews the research on the effects of gut microbes on eating behaviors. Alcock et al. write:

> Despite negative effects on health and survival, unhealthy eating patterns are often difficult to change. The resistance to change is frequently framed as a matter of 'self-control,' and it has been suggested that multiple 'selves' or cognitive modules exist...each vying for control over our eating behavior. Here, we suggest another possibility: that evolutionary conflict between host and microbes in the gut leads microbes to divergent interests over host eating behavior. Gut microbes may manipulate host eating behavior in ways that promote their fitness at the expense of host fitness. (940)

Our gut microbiota—these fermenting microbes that outnumber us—may also exercise a kind of non-verbal, non-logical suasion. Given the growing interest in fermentation, the role of bacteria in fermentation, the role of bacteria in our conception of "humans" and human behavior, I want to take seriously the idea of a micro(be)political rhetoric. Politics, too, flow throughout ecologies of which humans—if there is any stable thing that we can still call that—are just a small part of the picture seen only from one limited perspective.

In this chapter, I use the lens of micropolitics to look at countercultural food discourse, of which fermentation discourse is a subset. I review the ways that countercultural food discourse and fermentation discourse have been approach in rhetoric and composition, then I do a rhetorical analysis of a talk given by Katz in Austin at the Austin Fermentation Festival. Finally, I suggest ways in which fermentation and fermentation discourse reshape our relationships to Pollan's "nested communities," from our microbiome to our "selves." I posit a micro(be)political ethos that emphasizes the suasion that happens through invisible and non-verbal rhetorical forces.

Micropolitics

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of micropolitics has been useful in complicating conceptions of rhetoric that would reduce persuasion to deliberative democracy (see Livingston). In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Supple segmentarity cannot be restricted to primitive peoples. It is not the vestige of the savage within us but a perfectly contemporary function, inseparable from the other. Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms or the same relations or the same nature or even the same type of multiplicity. If they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other. The configurations differ, for example, between the primitives and us, but the two segmentarities are always in presupposition. In short, everything

> is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics.

Because of the way they fuse micropolitics and macropolitics, Deleuze and Guattari are often applied to situations in the rhetoric of food. Their articulation of conflicting, contradictory ideas that coexist in and flow through individuals and cultures make Deleuze and Guattari useful for talking about the seeming contradictions of peaceful food revolutions (Katz) or urban foragers who espouse living off the land while using online databases to locate foraging sites (Nicotra). Micropolitical activity cannot be divorced from macropolitical activity. There is a politics that unfolds at the level of individual bodies and everyday practices, and it is not unrelated to a macropolitics that unfolds at the policy level. In an interview with Joel McKim, Brian Massumi expands on the relationship between micro- and macro- political activity. Massumi says, "Micropolitical and macropolitical go together. One is never without the other. They are processual reciprocals. They aliment each other. At their best, they are mutually corrective" (19). More specifically, Massumi outlines specific ways in which macro- and micro- politics mutually sustain one another (I have broken them up into bullet points here):

- "Micropolitics is not programmatic. It doesn't construct and impose global solutions." It is also not "separate from that kind of macro-activity."
- "Anything that augments powers of existence creates conditions for micropolitical flourishings. No body flourishes without enough food and without health care."
- "Micropolitical interventions need macro solutions. But success at the macropolitical level is at best partial without a complementary

micropolitical flourishing. Without it, the tendency is toward standardization."

- "Since macropolitical solutions are generally applicable by definition, by definition they act to curtail the variety and exuberance of forms of life."
- "Macropolitical intervention targets minimal conditions of survival. Micropolitics complements that by fostering an excess of conditions of emergence. That inventiveness is where new solutions start to crystallize."
- "The potentials produced at the micropolitical level feed up, climbing the slope that macropolitics descends" (19)

One of the most salient points in Massumi's differentiation of macropolitics and micropolitics is that one can can see success at the macropolitical level by looking at the activity at the micropolitical level. This is akin to fermentation. When setting up the preconditions for fermentation and putting something up to ferment, you can see if the fermentation is successful by watching things bubbling up. You can see colors change. You can taste things turning. You can smell the bacteria at work. Even though you cannot see or control the microbes, you can set up the conditions (macropolitics) and observe the results of microbial behavior (micropolitics).

Countercultural Food Discourse

Reading countercultural food discourse—which emphasizes social and microbial ferment— through micropolitical screen, I'll attempt to tease out some rhetorical trends and point to new conversations that those trends might enkindle. The conversation begins with an awakening to the politics of food at an individual consumer level. In *Coming Home to Eat:*

The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods Gary Nabhan writes about a trip to his ancestral home of Lebanon. There he has a moment where he begins to see food choices as political:

> I suddenly realized that food should be valued less for its caloric content and more for what it expresses about our relationships with the world: the carbon footprint left in bringing a food to our mouths; the economics, politics, and ethics of favoring some producers over others; and the cultural memories that arise in our minds whenever we muse over a particular mouthful of flavors.

Although Nabhan was writing in the early aughts, and his trip was prior to that, the idea that food can be micropolitical is much older than that. The idea that micropolitical actions involving food are a way to challenge the mainstream food system has been a part of food discourse in America since the 1830s. In *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On the Food Industry*, Warren Belasco writes that "in the fiercely contentious Jacksonian period (the 1830s), radical vegetarians resisted mainstream medical authorities (who advised a heavy, meat-based diet)." Later, "the critique of processed foods during the Progressive era (1900–1914) mirrored widespread concern about irresponsible corporations and dangerous urban-industrial conditions." We saw another wave in the '60s, according to Belasco: "in the Johnson-Nixon years ... the rediscovery of organic foods and holistic healing accompanied the ecology movement, which was itself a reaction against the wholesale destruction of nature and tradition..." In these waves of political movements, we see how food-based ideologies—vegetarianism, organic food, holistic medicine, locavore eating and ecological perspectives—tend to cluster together with other ideologies like anti-corporate and anti-war sentiments. Small batch fermented foods—from raw milk cheeses to sourdough bread to

yogurt to pickles to kimchi to kombucha—became representative of the culture that sought to counter (among other things) the corporate, industrial food system.

If unpredictable, non-homogenous, small-scale fermented foods came to symbolize the counterculture, then white bread came to symbolize the corporate, industrial food system. In *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* Aaron Bobrow-Strain writes "In the early years of the 1960s counterculture, 'white bread' came to signify all that was bland, homogeneous, and suburban. White bread was establishment, plastic, and corporate —everything the counterculture in all its manifestations hoped to destroy." Bobrow-Strain writes that this meaning moved from food to culture more broadly "you know that music described as 'white bread' will be funkless pablum. A TV show set 'in a white bread cul-de-sac' will deal with life in cookie-cutter tract mansions." In this discourse, the opposite of corporate, industrial white bread is small-batch, slow fermented brown bread. Of course both breads must be fermented, but according to Bobrow-Strain, white bread was the result of failed attempts by food scientists to eliminate the fermentation process altogether. They could not do it, but they did speed up the process and cut labor costs significantly. Bobrow-Strain writes "Fermentation rebels against an ultra-pasteurized food system and our culture's obsession with anti-bacterial, hand-sanitizing, border-guarding purity...Fermentation teaches us to live with impurity, not against it." White bread has stood in opposition to "naturalness." Bobrow-Strain explains how fermentation operates in rhetorics of naturalness:

> The dream of naturalness runs strong in food movements, and many avid fermenters cling to visions of authentic connection to nature and the past. Slow Food writer Dominique Fournier concludes, 'Whether in domestic

> rituals or public codes, people use fermented foods to maintain a harmonious relationship with Nature and, more generally, all that is transcendental.' From this perspective, fermentation offers a pathway back to 'authentic' and 'natural' life.

As I noted in Chapters 1 and 2, words like "authentic" and "natural" are problematic. They are easily operationalized, co-opted, and rendered contradictory when corporations like Chipotle, Whole Foods Market, and Walmart deploy them for the purposes of marketing. (This is not to slight corporations or marketing, but rather to point out how arguments over keywords are as much about economic movements as they are about social movements.) The larger problem suggested by two-sided struggle over keywords is an overly simplistic view of social movements. There is something too neat and tidy about a white bread/brown bread dichotomy. The us/them, white bread/brown bread, authentic/fake, natural/unnatural framing of food movements is as reductionist as any binary framing. One of the biggest commonplaces of counterculture food discourse—and what encourages many of these binaries—is a rhetoric of revolution that pits one side (culture) against another (counterculture).

In *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved*, Katz writes about traveling the country on a book tour, talking to those interested in fermentation. "Revolution" may seem a bit hyperbolic to describe the shifts in food culture at this moment in the United States, but if protests over the minimum wage paid to fast food workers are quashed, violence could erupt. It would not be the first time food and revolution were connected. From the Moscow salt riots to the Boston Tea Party, food and revolution are often linked, usually through economic provocations like taxation. The economic changes brought about through

revolution have effects on the foodscape as well. For example, bread played a significant role in the French Revolution (Civitello 189). Studies have also shown links between violence and the low wages paid by fast food corporations (Gould et al.). According to the World Bank, low wages, poor working conditions in the food industries, and rising food costs are a recipe for food riots all over the world. So there are such things as food revolutions, and I do not want to minimize the role of food in political uprisings. But referring to present U.S. food movements (often started by countercultures and adopted by mainstream cultures) as "revolutions" is rhetorically significant because of the hyperbole involved.

"Revolution" now operates as hyperbole that, depending on the rhetorical effectiveness of a particular use, could be seen as a rhetorical virtue or a rhetorical vice. Take, for example, *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution*, which Michael S. Bruner & Laura K. Hahn analyzed in an article "Irony and Food Politics." They analyze the show to demonstrate how irony uncovers structural food oppression" (1). We could build on their argument to pull out the irony inherent in the show's title: a major network television show featuring a celebrity chef who makes arguably unsuccessful interventions into school lunches in a single district in a West Virginia town with an obesity problem for the purposes of entertainment does not constitute a revolution in the historical usage of the term. So is Katz's use of "revolution" a similar stylistic vice? It does refer to collective grass roots movements, albeit ones that are decidedly more peaceful than some past food revolutions. While socializing on tour, Katz found that "inevitably the conversation would stray into other realms of fermentation, specifically social ferment." In *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved,* he writes, "[T]he diverse activists I meet everywhere make me feel part of a broad movement to build alternatives to the dominant food system and transform the world one bite at a time." This is a common

refrain. And it has all of the hallmarks that we have come to see repeated in countercultural food discourse: countercultural activists who work against the mainstream in micropolitical ways to bring about a so-called revolution, even though that revolution is financed by and profits mainstream capitalist enterprises. *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved* mentions "revolution" many, many times. Katz quotes Ghandi and Malcolm X. He writes about the Industrial Revolution. The book is titled for the Gil Scott-Heron song "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Katz writes:

> Taking care of ourselves, producing good-quality food, and supporting local producers and markets have to be recognized as activist work. To me, activism is an attitude: emboldened and empowered. I like the quote attributed to Gandhi: 'Be the change you want to see in the world.' It's important to hold social institutions accountable because they exert so much power, but ultimately no institution can bestow upon us the worlds we dream. Nothing is more revolutionary than actively seeking to embody and manifest the ideals we hold.

And yet, as Katz points out, fermentation is so old that it predates even our knowledge of bacteria and yeasts as such, let alone pasteurization. While it is popular to refer to countercultural movements as "revolutions," the way the dominant food culture (or lack thereof) came about was actually far more revolutionary than any band of roving mead-drunk fermentos. If revolutions are defined by quick and dramatic shifts in power that include charismatic leaders whose names become synonymous with their causes, then pasteurization fits the bill perfectly. Even though we take it for granted that our food will be pasteurized when we buy it at the grocery store—even though the "p" in pasteurization has

already been lowercased—pasteurization was a recent, swift, political power struggle. In *The Pasteurization of France*, Bruno Latour unpacks the "habitually formulated" construction: "the revolution introduced into medicine by Pasteur" (13). "What we have here" Latour writes, "is an attribution of cause and time. We might also say that it represents a dominant point of view—a point of view that was therefore victorious in a battle fought with other agents pursuing other aims at other times" (13). That is, the characterization of "pasteurization" as a "revolution" is as common as pasteurization itself. Latour points out that the fact that Pasteurization is named as such also suggests a perspective. He writes, "When we are dealing with scientists, we still admire the great genius and virtue of the one man and too rarely suspect the importance of the forces that made him great" (14). If the underground food movements that Katz covers in *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved* are to be considered revolutions at all, then—in light of the pasteurization revolution—they must be considered counterrevolutions. This is fitting, after all, given that they come out of counterculture. What does counterculture mean anymore, anyways?

If it seems like counterculture food talk is not that "counter" anymore, that might be because of the way that it has been "commodified." This process of commodification is another stage in the development of food movements. Belasco writes that "countercultural conformity was channeled into what Thomas Frank calls the 'commodified dissent' of 'cool' marketers such as The Gap, Time-Warner, and Whole Foods." What The Gap did for/to blue jeans and Time-Warner did for/to rock 'n' roll, Whole Foods Market is doing for food. This is not just about selling craft pickles or kombucha, but about selling a lifestyle. There is more than a chance that Katz's "alternatives to the dominant food system" have become part of the dominant food system. It is difficult to imagine Katz's brand of revolution lined

up neatly in the grocery aisle, since it relies so little on uniformity and so much on ever-evolving and changing relationships and DIY processes. But if there is a way to commodify making your own pickles, the market will find a way. Already, the teaching of such skills has become commodified with players in the dominant food system, like Whole Foods Market and HEB, offering cooking classes on pickling taught by community members (Kate Payne). Even if you cannot scan a barcode for "making your own sauerkraut" at Whole Foods Market, you can buy the ingredients, the knowledge, and the experience. But it is not a one-way transaction. It is not only that Whole Foods Market is selling something; brands engage with their communities of customers. For example, Whole Foods Market sponsored the Austin Fermentation Festival, which was free to the public and featured Katz as its keynote speaker.

This kind of arrangement—allowing oneself or one's art to be commodified by a larger, more well financed enterprise—used to be called "selling out." But that term—or at least the sentiment that used to go with it—no longer fits. Willie Nelson sold out to Taco Bell and even Bill Hicks forgave him, saying, "You do a commercial, you are off the artistic roll call for ever. And that goes for everyone except Willie Nelson...I just avert my eyes when he sings about tacos, you know what I mean?" (*Rant in E Minor*). William S. Burroughs did a TV commercial for Nike and Thomas Frank claims, in "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," it was not selling out. He writes:

> The most startling revelation to emerge from the Burroughs/Nike partnership is not that corporate America has overwhelmed its cultural foes or that Burroughs can somehow remain 'subversive' through it all, but the complete lack of dissonance between the two sides. Of course Burroughs is

> not 'subversive,' but neither has he 'sold out:' His ravings are no longer appreciably different from the official folklore of American capitalism. What's changed is not Burroughs, but business itself.

If Hicks can forgive Nelson for doing a Taco Bell commercial and Burroughs doing a TV commercial is not seen as selling out, then maybe selling out does not have the same cultural significance it once did. Perhaps any stigma of engaging with corporate brands is on its way out and a new time is emerging. Maybe we are seeing a time when well-financed institutions and brands that support innovative work are seen essential to healthy ecologies and the cultures that ferment within them. Maybe social movements require the capital established by brands to wield political power. One might argue that in creating associative networks with Pollan to enhance its brand, Chipotle sought to commodify Pollan's work. Or perhaps Pollan sold out to Chipotle in an undisclosed deal. But where are the limits of commodification? If we understand Pollan as a brand, he, too might be commodifying Katz's work. Katz, for his part, might be commodifying the work of the legions of fermentos that turn out to swap culture with him at events like the Austin Fermentation Festival. But Katz is also selling Whole Foods Market as he engages their networks. With the creation of this network, even something as countercultural as a Chinese fermented beverage made with a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast is mainstreamed. Not only will Whole Foods Market sell you kombucha, they will sponsor your efforts to make it at home. When Whole Foods Market—headed up by ubercapitalist John Mackey—literally sells this kind of culture, there is no counterculture. There is no revolution. There are only networks of association. And/But there is still change.

"Spaces of Possibility" for Food Discourse in Rhetoric and Composition

After Belasco's oxymoronic "countercultural conformity" emerged as a concept in the late '80s, scholars of rhetoric and writing also turned toward food and came to similar conclusions about countercultural discourse. In "Politics on Your Plate: Building and Burning Bridges across Organic, Vegetarian, and Vegan Discourse," in *The Rhetoric of Food*, Laura K. Hahn and Michael S. Bruner write, "The once counterculture ideals of organic food seem to have found their way into the mainstream (e.g., organic lettuce at Costco)." There is no counterculture. There is no revolution. And yet there sure is still a lot of talk about revolution. Revolutionary rhetoric in countercultural food discourse is complicated by hyperbole, which can cut both ways. Revolutionary rhetoric is complicated by the way it can be taken up by, and applied to, more than one group in a social and political mêlée. Revolutionary rhetoric is complicated by the way that it is commodified by mainstream culture. The results of all this complication are the myriad contradictions that flourish in countercultural revolutionary discourse. In an essay "Craft Rhetoric" Jeff Rice points out how these contradictions operate in craft beer rhetorics. After an explanation of the way the word "revolution" gets deployed in discourse about food and drink, Rice posits a "craft rhetoric," that "following Barthes, need not be the tracing of revolutionary or oppositional gestures but instead involves consideration of the contradictions that craft logics circulate (like any other cultural logic)" (3). Rice sketches out "the rhetorical implications of craft as not a pure narrative, but as a hybrid narrative" (1). A rhetoric that hinges on the consideration of contradictions might help us talk about food movements in ways other than the mainstream culture/countercultural revolution. So what do we do with the recurring rhetorical hyperbole of "food revolutions" and the contradictions inherent in

them? I think we can, following Rice, use them as the exigence for experimenting with new ways of thinking, talking, writing, and capturing the social change that happens around and through food. Perhaps we can talk about these changes in terms that are more quotidian than revolutionary. As Joshua J. Frye and Michael S. Bruner write in their introduction to *The Rhetoric of Food,* the field needs to continue to find new ways to address food and do rhetoric:

> rhetorical studies must take a critical stance (address issues of power, privilege, identity, culture, and control) and must offer alternatives through the auspices of imagination, message (de/re) construction, representation, (re)constitutive policy critique, ideological framing, evaluation of values, metaphors, narratives, rituals, land-use, everyday practices, claimed materiality, privilege, image, and oppression.

Writing, thinking, talking about, mapping, capturing, audio and video recording places, spaces, and networks are offering rhetoric new opportunities and new artifacts to study.

The world has become a 3D rhetorical artifact, and not surprisingly, social geographers are helpful in talking about these kinds of things. In *Alternative Food Networks: Knowledge, Practice, and Politics* David Goodman, Melanie DuPuis, and Michael Goodman write about how social food movements are evolving: "This 'new wave' of social activism includes the burgeoning alternative food movement in its many and diverse forms, from local farmers' markets to fair trade producer cooperatives." The alternative food movements, as Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman frame them, "offer a vision that people, by eating differently, can change the worlds of food as well." But when they argue about changing the world, people who participate in food movements—and even people who analyze them—

are often really arguing about changing capitalism. Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman write that those kinds of economic changes are possible from within the framework of capitalism:

> The new politics of food provisioning and global fair trade builds on imaginaries and material practices infused with different values and rationalities that challenge instrumental capitalist logics and mainstream worldviews. These alternative projects are seen as templates for the reconfiguration of capitalist society along more ecologically sustainable and socially progressive lines. The discursive and material development of such 'spaces of possibility' over the past 30 to 40 years demonstrates that alternative forms of social organization with their own operational rationalities can coexist, and even coevolve, with contemporary capitalist society.

Alternative food movements are not just arguing for, say, fermented foods. They are encouraging social fermentation in those spaces of possibility opened up by the activity of seeking out alternative food supply chains. Just as the space of the coffee house in England was central to The Enlightenment (see Steven Johnson), the farmers market, a fermentation festival, or some other part of an alternative food network might be the place from which another intellectual movement is bubbling up.

There is some version of this intellectual movement happening in rhetoric and composition wherein scholars are looking at the ways bodies are persuaded to move through spaces in search of food. In "Spatial Affects and Rhetorical Relations At the Cherry Creek Farmers' Market," in *The Rhetoric of Food*, Justin Eckstein and Donovan Conley key in on the micropolitics of food shopping, arguing for the famers market as a key site of public

discourse. They look at the space of the market to "investigate a broader spectrum of spatial affects that condition the arrangement of bodies and communities." They write, "Like the Lyceums and Tent Chautauquas of the nineteenth century, farmers' markets have become mixed spaces of social leisure, civic training, and political hope." They pay particular attention to the ways that "private pleasure is fused with public morality, and the delights of everyday consumption are aligned with the political urgencies of cosmopolitan citizenship." They "conceptualize the politics of the everyday as a micropolitics." Eckstein and Conley build on Massumi's work to explain how affect fits into the equation. They write: "micropolitics describes a politics crafted around the contingency of the present. It is interested in how the potentiality of a given situation can be both activated and conducted. It is grounded in the realm of affect, the somatic, which is both distinct from and related to emotion." They articulate the distinction between affect and emotion thusly: "Affect refers to a pure intensity occurring outside of language (and often perception), whereas emotion occurs when the intensity is incorporated into the symbolic order (language), personalized and narrativized." In short, the difference between affect and emotion is "illustrated by the difference between eating a delicious meal and attempting to explain it." Eckstein and Conley articulate a difference between affect and emotion as those terms relate to language. In Eckstein and Conley's definitions, affect occurs *prior to* language, whereas emotion is the process of incorporating affect *into* language. That said, baby talk, clearly a language relation that precedes "language" can communicate emotion quite clearly. There are many other stages and conditions that we might call "becoming language" that would throw this affect/emotion distinction into question. It might be argued that animals have emotions. It might be argued that those who do not have language should not be considered only to have affect.

But it is useful to make a distinction between affect and emotion, if only to subject it to a nuanced critique.

In a similar article in *PRE/TEXT* titled "The Urban Food Database and the Pedagogy of Attunement," Jody Nicotra builds on Deleuze and Guattari's iteration of micropolitics, arguing that politics unfold on a small scale of "bodies and everyday practices." Nicotra writes:

> While few would dispute the importance of interventions at the level of commercial regulations and state policy, these are not the only—or even the best—way that political change can be enacted. In fact, Gay Hawkins in *The Ethics of Waste* (2006) has argued that interventions like the ones described above run the risk of 'creating moralistic blueprints for changes in consciousness' (7). As Deleuze and Guattari have argued, politics also gets powerfully enacted at a smaller scale, through individual bodies and everyday practices—what they first called 'micropolitics' (229). (99)

The relationship between affect, the body, and micropolitics is also articulated by Nicotra via Hawkins: "Micropolitcs tends to occur in a more dispersed fashion via a variety of informal but active experiments with bodily habits and consuming practices which, as Hawkins...suggests, 'are played out in between large-scale political and economic institutions and the subinstitutional movements of affect, desire, and minor practices"'(99).

All of these things—bodies, affect, desire—are, as Barthes might say, "structured" into institutions, which are themselves bodies, albeit of a different type. Our individual daily actions have significance because our needs have been, in Barthes words, "satisfied by standardized production and consumption" ("Toward a Psychosociology" 29). The farmers'

market is one model used to structure our need for food. The supermarket is another. The corner store, bodega, and 7-11 are other iterations of how these needs are structured, designed, built and navigated. Affect is part of what propels us to and through these spaces. Articulating these ideas, Ekstein and Conley write:

> Subjects are ordinary bodies moving through ordinary space. What arranges bodies and spaces, rhetorically, is affects. There is much that happens, and much that matters, at a farmers' market that pushes past the realm of words or images to the deeply material terrain of affect. (176)

Myriad are the ways that affect takes us beyond the realm of words and images. Our needs and appetites are structured not only by written, perceptible symbolic media, but also by invisible media carried by non-human actors like microbes and signaling molecules like hormones. The media created by the microscopic actors may be fleeting or even imperceptible from the "human" perspective. Humans can extend their capabilities, as with a scientist using a microscope to perceive these microbes, but this act of extension calls into question the very notion of a human distinct from assistive technologies and pulls us back into the realm of the posthuman. So when we talk about micropolitics, we are automatically talking about affects and bodies and spaces and what moves us through them.

Jeff Rice ("Jeff Rice Interview") and Thomas Rickert (*Ambient Rhetoric*) both use the concept of terroir to connect food and place and examine how our rhetorics and our ways of living are intertwined. Rickert begins his discussion of ambient rhetoric with the notion of terroir. Terroir most often refers to the characteristics imparted to a wine by the growing region of the grapes from which it is made. Terroir is influenced by the soil, the environment, the weather, and so on. The idea of terroir has been extended beyond wine, to

beer, coffee, and other foods, and Rickert has extended the notion of terroir further to rhetoric. As a way of demonstrating the way that rhetorical terroir can move us away from revolutionary discourse, I want to relate a personal/professional narrative about a trip to the Austin Fermentation Festival and do a rhetorical analysis of a speech given there by Katz. In so doing, I am performing a rhetoric that intentionally flows from the personal to the professional to the post-pasteurian to the scholarly. I do this to highlight the idea that if we are communities nested in and intersecting with one another, our rhetorics do not necessarily stay put. Even if we control our words and our images, we transmit our affects from one community to the next. We also carry with us the tools to capture the rhetorics unfolding around us.

Austin Fermentation Festival

In my professional life, I am affiliated in several nested agencies: The University of Texas at Austin, the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Rhetoric and Writing, the Digital Writing & Research Lab, the admin team that runs the DWRL. The DWRL admin office is also the hub for candy, water, coffee and small appliances like freezers, fridges, microwaves, and toasters, so the talk among the admin team often turns to food. One day in 2014, one of the admin team, Steven LeMieux, mentioned he started brewing the sour tonic beverage of northeast Eurasian origin called kombucha. Kombucha is brewed using a SCOBY, or symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast that is similar to a vinegar mother. The SCOBY produces babies at a pretty fast rate if you feed it a steady diet of sweet tea, and LeMieux had many kombucha babies to give away. I expressed my interest, but had to set up a SCOBY hotel for them at home. (SCOBYs are usually housed in a large glass container

with a spout and an open top covered with cheesecloth.) I kept delaying making the space, and setting up the container. Eventually, LeMieux brought in a glass container with a SCOBY to the office and we started brewing kombucha in the office. I took one of the offspring colonies home and started brewing there as well. Consequently, the talk in the office often turned to fermentation. When Sandor Katz came to town for the Austin Fermentation Festival, LeMieux told me about it, we bumped into one another there, and we shared stories of our fermentation adventures around the water cooler (yes, literally) on Monday. All of this may seem like mere water cooler talk, but, as always happens among fermenters, we were sharing cultures in multiple senses of the word.

I took my SCOBY offspring to the first Austin Fermentation Festival on November 15, 2014 at the Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Austin and swapped them out for kefir grains before attending workshops on cheesemaking and meadmaking and listening to Sandor Katz's keynote talk. (I recorded and archived the talk at https://soundcloud.com/willburdette/sets/sandor-katz-at-austin). In the talk, Katz said that attempts to store food led to fermentation. "If you wanted to be a hunter/gatherer and spend everyday procuring the food resources that are going to get you through that day, then the dynamics of how those microorganisms transform the food over time are not that important" he said. "But as soon as you get interested in putting food from today away to eat tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, then you are dealing with the dynamics of how microorganisms are transforming food over time." There is an intentionality to fermentation that is not unlike recent understandings of the rhetorical situation. The process of fermentation lies somewhere between passively letting food rot and exerting great amounts of control over the environment with chemicals, refrigeration, or other complex technologies. Fermentation

is intentional, but it requires collaboration from unseen forces. Katz says, "we don't use the word 'fermentation' to describe rotten food. We reserve the world 'fermentation' to describe microbial transformations that are desirable or intentional in some ways. And so fermentation here is a practical art. We use it in foods and beverages in order to accomplish certain ends." Katz's description of fermentation as a practical art is significant for rhetoricians who have often described rhetoric in the same way. Situating fermentation and rhetoric in the same family of practical arts makes rhetoric an essential, inevitable practice. In this way, it is not an option to do or not do rhetoric. Rhetoric is always happening all around us. Our art is in how we harness it.

If fermentation is primarily the practical art of food preservation, what secondary ends might we seek to accomplish through fermentation? Katz articulates the following additional motives for fermentation: alcohol creation, flavor development, health benefits, and economic incentives. These are things that literally move people. These are all motivations for creating the environments in which fermentation occurs, and they bring up an important point about the relationship between our motivations and our rhetorical environments: We may want the bacteria and yeasts to create kombucha, but we cannot force them to do so. And, even if we persuade the microbes to do their work, we cannot force anyone to taste it or like it or buy it. We may be motivated by a plan to get rich with a SCOBY and some tea, but there are no guarantees that the environments we set up will be conducive to our plan. Still, we go through the trouble of creating those environments based only on the possibility of the rewards of fermentation. We are moved by microbes to do a bunch of work on their environments for them in hopes that they will produce alcohol, preserve our food, develop interesting flavors, health benefits, and maybe even earn us some

cash. About alcohol, Katz says, "alcohol itself can be thought of as a practical benefit of fermentation." In fact, it is likely that alcohol was the original reason for fermentation. Katz says, "Every person who is writing about the phenomenon of fermentation from a historical standpoint would recognize that alcoholic beverages are the oldest products of fermentation." But alcohol is not unrelated to preservation. Hard cider preserves apples and wine preserves grapes. Both kept agricultural workers working for long hours. Katz says, "certainly we could think of wine as a form of preserving grapes but wine is more than preserving grapes." In fact, alcohol creation is a way of preserving many parts of an ecosystem. In addition to preserving and storing fruits and grains, alcohol preserves water. It can act as a social preservative, strengthening the ties of a group. It can act as an economic preservative. In the realm of food preservation, alcohol is more prevalent than refrigeration. Katz says, "refrigeration is very very recent and, you know, most households on planet Earth do not have a refrigerator in 2014." He says that refrigeration "depends on a reliable source of cheap energy and it's not at all clear that we will always have that available to us." He continues, "So I think it really behooves us not to lose the strands of cultural information that enable people to make use of milk, and meat, and vegetables without the benefit of a refrigerator." There is again a bit of hyperbole in Katz's rhetoric. Refrigeration is a very recent technology, but the ideas that it might go away or that we might lose the cultural knowledge of how to ferment because of it are unlikely outside of some pretty dire scenarios. That said, he uttered those words to a packed house of fermentation enthusiasts who did not appear to take it as hyperbolic. There seems to be an *enthousiasmos* among fermentos that fosters tolerance for extreme rhetoric.

About taste, Katz says, "You walk into a gourmet food store anywhere and mostly what fills the shelves are products of fermentation. Fermentation creates strong flavors." These strong flavors are created by bacteria and yeast, but they are constructed socially as well. Katz says, "so many of the flavors of fermentation are acquired tastes. You are not born loving them, but, you know, once you learn to to like them, they are just these compelling flavors that just, you know, keep you coming back for more." That repetition, that coming back for more, is part of the process of social and cultural replication. Each time that we come back for more is another event in the transmission of culture. The way we talk about taste in both the sensory sense and the cultural sense literalizes the point that there is no hard distinction between bodies and cultures. In "The Good Body, Skilled in Eating," Donovan Conley notes an "important opening in rhetorical theory" made by Burke's turn toward the body, a turn pointed out by Debrah Hawhee in *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*. Conley writes that through that opening, "we may begin to think of taste operating in the fluid space of overlap between the symbolic and non-symbolic, the human and non-human" (10). Conley develops "a materialist ethic of communion grounded in the constitutive powers of taste" (10). To say that taste, embodied and not, is constitutive of culture is not that extreme. Katz's talk to hundreds of people was a performance—one of many in an unbroken string of fermentation talk that goes back to the beginning of agriculture—of the way taste brings us together and binds us to one another. Both the tastes we sense with our tongues and our tastes in culture help us from communities.

Katz also articulates several health benefits of fermentation, noting that "it is really hard to generalize. You know the world of fermented foods and beverages is so broad. I

mean, it's not as if chocolate, salami, sauerkraut, yogurt and kombucha all have identical nutritional qualities, but the process of fermentation does transform nutrients in food in some clear patterns of ways." Those patterns can be grouped around "predigestion" and "detoxification," and "generating additional nutrients." But it should be noted that, in matters of health and fermentation, we are clearly in the realm of Plato's *pharmakon.* As Derrida notes in "The Rhetoric of Drugs," "The bad pharmakon can always parasitize the good pharmakon, bad repetition can always parasitize good repetition." And, Davis notes, the devil is in the dosage and the mix (*Breaking Up (at) Totality,* 122, 233). The effects of fermentation on health depends on the quantity and mix consumed, but it also depends on the quantity and mix of specific colonies of bacteria and yeasts that do the work. A little kombucha is seen by many as a healthful elixir, while too much mead is a recipe for a hangover. Health also depends not only on the microorganisms we ingest or the ones that make the mead, but also the ones that live inside us. Katz says, "these elaborate communities of microorganisms that are part of us, you know, they are not freeloaders. They are not parasites." The distinction here, between an organism that harms its host and one that does not, is important. Katz talks about the "war on bacteria" that is waged because we tend to lump all bacteria into the category of harmful parasites in our ecosystem. But the bacteria that live in us are vital to not just our health, but our ability to function at all. Katz says, "They enable us to function. They give us our functionality. We couldn't possibly survive, and absolutely couldn't thrive, without them." This kind of fermento rhetoric follows the same logic that Haraway and other post-humanists have articulated. We are a "multi-species." We are "becoming-with" these colonies of bacteria and yeasts. Katz says "the 'war on bacteria' is more than an ideological indoctrination. It's chemical warfare. It's antiviral drugs.

It's antibacterial cleansing products. It's chlorinated water. It's this whole sort of arsenal of chemicals that we're exposed to all the time." While the hyperbole bubbles up again when the rhetoric turns to "war," the results of hyperbole depend on the audience's attitude toward war. If we understand "war" as organized, sustained violence toward a group of living beings, then the systematic killing of microbes with chemicals fits the bill. The charge of hyperbole, or the evaluation of its effectiveness, depends on how large one draws one's circle of empathy. When fermentos talk about health, they are not talking only, or even primarily, about their own individual health, but the health of the nested ecologies that constitute them.

There are economic incentives to fermentation as well, and many of them intersect with locavore rhetoric (which may be why Pollan has found Katz's work so attractive). Katz says, "'You can't have local food without fermentation. I mean, the vast majority of what people eat are not the raw products of agriculture. It's all of the things that you can turn the raw products of agriculture into." The economics of fermenting refer back to the concept of preservation. If you rely on local sources of food outside the cold chain, then when there is a bounty, preservation techniques are required. If you can make the best of local bounty, then you reduce your dependence on long, expensive cold chain technologies. Katz notes that food transportation (like refrigeration) is dependent on inexpensive sources of energy. He says, "if all of our food is coming from thousands of miles, that's all right as long as the waterways or the roadways or the railways are functioning. It works as long as the fuel is cheap." He says that "any kind of disruption...makes it impossible to get the food we need." One counterargument to Katz's argument is that our food transportation systems are fairly efficient. As Tom Standage notes in *An Edible History of Humanity* "A large ship can carry a

ton of food 800 miles on a gallon of fuel; the figures are about 200 miles for a train, 60 miles for a truck, and 20 miles for a car. So the drive to and from a shop or market can produce more emissions, for a given weight of food, than the whole of the rest of its journey." This is not to invalidate Katz's argument, but rather to reveal them as arguments, rather than common sense or practical wisdom. His arguments are, as Pollan's citations of him suggest, compelling to many. His talk at the Austin Fermentation Festival outlined the rationale for fermentation through the benefits—preservation, alcohol, flavor, health benefits, and economic incentives—created by it. Through this analysis of Katz's talk, I've shown how, despite the fact that fermentation occurs naturally, it is far from self-evident or set apart from social and cultural interventions. Arguments for (and against, and about) fermentation are part of what spreads fermentation culture. This is what Katz was articulating. But it is important to not take Katz's arguments as the whole rhetorical situation. These arguments come from social, human desires, but much of their work is not carried out on a human scale. Arguments for fermentation are crafted in words on a human scale, but argumentation is not the only form of persuasion. Argumentation is not the whole of rhetoric. If we shift our focus away from Katz's words to the whole event, we find that there are many other kinds of non-verbal rhetoric happening there. Katz says, "I'd just like to leave you with the thought that you all are like starter cultures and it's through your bubbliness and your desire to share your excitement about these foods and beverages with people you know that general interest in these foods and beverages will continue to grow." There is an *enthousiasmos* that produces rhetorical effects despite the words spoken in a room, recorded on a phone, or written on a page. We could counter every one of Katz's arguments for home fermentation, but that would not negate the persuasive power displayed by the

bodies that came to hear him talk. It would not stop fermentation, nor those who encourage it.

Toward a Micro(be)political Ethos

What does this turn toward the micropolitics of food suggest about about our ethos and identity, that "self" from which we practice rhetoric? The idea that everyday actions—attending a fermentation festival, listening Katz speak or reading his books, making kombucha, shopping at the farmers market, rating and trading craft beer—are politically and rhetorically significant relies on the idea that to be one you must be many. How might that idea change our concept of ethos and rhetorical activity? I think there are six principles that might follow from this kind of micro(be)political thinking: 1) Change happens through aggregated mimetic repetitions, and these changes can be significant without being revolutionary; 2) Our ecosystems outlive us; 3) We leave traces in multiple media and transmit those traces through multiple networks; 4) We can create environments for the things we want to happen, but we cannot guarantee those things will happen; 5) There are no hard distinctions between our biology, our moods, and our rhetorical styles; 6) We exist in the traces we leave and we transmit ourselves to others through these traces, but always incompletely.

Change happens through aggregated mimetic repetitions, and these changes can be significant without being revolutionary. Just like micropolitics, micro(be)politics relies on tiny aggregations and repetitions. Social movements are a kind of aggregation that brings together people in a way that creates and amplifies vitality. These small everyday activities only matter if we do them repeatedly and collectively. In the same way that actual

fermentation occurs, social ferment requires colonies of micro-agents replicating and re-enacting particular behaviors. But through this repetition, all kinds of change happens. This is the trick of mimesis and alterity. As Michael Taussig writes:

> Pulling you this way and that, mimesis plays this trick of dancing between the very same and the very different. An impossible but necessary, indeed an everyday affair, mimesis registers both sameness and difference, of being like, and of being Other. Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity. (129)

This change through repetition happens at all levels of our being. Microevents matter because of how they are repeated. There are several notions of mimesis at work here. John Muckelbauer's explanation of the way that mimesis has been defined in rhetoric is instructive here. He writes, "McKeon attempted to navigate this confusion by distinguishing three of the most common meanings of the term mimesis. Edward P. J. Corbett nicely summarizes McKeon's three primary meanings" (65). Already we can see how definitions of mimesis are inured through repetition, as with Corbett summarizing McKeon. Muckelbauer seeks to shake up the definitions of mimesis a bit, but first he repeats them: "1) the Platonic notion of an image-making faculty which produces extensions of ideal truth in the phenomenal world, 2) the Aristotelian notion of the representation of human actions, and 3) the rhetorical notion of copying, aping, simulating, emulating models" (65). But these three notions of mimesis are not distinct. Muckelbauer writes, "the three movements that we have been delineating are fused in any actual practice of imitation, regardless of whether that

practice occurs within the realm of rhetoric, literature, or philosophy" (88). Or, we might add, food. Even if it is not enacted in a self-conscious way, any act of mimesis engages Platonic image-making, Aristotelian representation, mere copying, and various other hybrids and reiterations. At the microbe level, the repeated feeding of cultures causes them to live, excrete, and reproduce which changes the substrate in which they live, breathe, eat, shit, die, and decompose. When we ingest them, they change our microbiome. But so-called humans are not as high on the food chain as we like to think. Our microbiome eats us as well.

Our ecosystems outlive us. In *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers,* Mary Roach writes about how bacteria precede humans and survive humans, not as a species (although that will likely be true, too), but as "individuals." She writes:

> The life of a bacterium is built around food. Bacteria don't have mouths or fingers or Wolf Ranges, but they eat. They digest. They excrete. Like us, they break their food down into its more elemental components. The enzymes in our stomachs break meat down into proteins. The bacteria in our gut break those proteins down into amino acids; they take up where we leave off. When we die, they stop feeding on what we've eaten and begin feeding on us.

The human being eaten by bacteria undoes a hierarchical food chain and takes us into the realm of the compostmodern.[11] If the postmodern is characterized by an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv) then the compostmodern is characterized by the idea that we do not have to believe that the ground is stable and unchanging to walk on it. We know that decomposing forces that are constantly remaking the ground we walk on, even if we need technology to see them. We carry that moving, shifting ground on us. We are

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[11] I borrow this term from the biennial conference put on by the San Francisco chapter of AIGA.

ambulating cultures of culture. And at some point, the individual, the author, is dead, pushing up daisies, Whitman's "foul meat." But culture and cultures continue to live and thrive despite the death of the author. The rhetorical milieu in which the individual lived and breathed and spoke and wrote predates and postdates the individual, writes and acts on and through the individual. In "Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living" Davis writes about "an irreducible but never simply innate rhetoricity" that "is responsible for the perpetual (re)animation of the life of the living, for 'my' life, the experience of which can only be both spectral and bereaved" (548). In other words, we might call this life-sustaining rhetorical milieu "rhetoricity."

We leave traces in multiple media and transmit those traces through multiple networks. First of all, media as I am articulating it here is a means of doing something, the means used to create a trace. Affect is part of the rhetorical, micropolitical scene, and it is transmitted not just by audio-visual media (of which words are part). It *can* be transmitted by these things, as we saw with Chipotle in chapter one, but it can also be transmitted through other sensory channels. If we can figure micropolitics as a way to examine how affects work in and through bodies and spaces, technology is always in the mix. It is possible to imagine an assemblage of bodies and spaces that involves food and not digital technology. That is, you may not care to pull out your iPhone while foraging or at the famers market. We may prefer to feel as if we are going back to the start, to a way of relating to food that is not only outside the mainstream corporate culture of capitalism, but also less techno-logical. But as soon as a market vendor accepts payment via Square register, the illusion of an idyllic, pre-digital, agrarian community is shattered. Beneath it all—everything we eat—is the database. The whole concept of micropolitics derives its power from collective action and

aggregation. The database logic, on top of which social media are built, is what now enables this collective action. Today we are many online and off. A micro(be)politics must account for biotechnologies, but also for the ubiquitous digital microbes—viruses, bots, scripts—that are part of our ecosystem. And, different parts of our ecosystem communicate via different media. Much, for example, can be communicated by the transmission of hormones and pheromones. In *The Transmission of Affect* Teresa Brennan writes, "the behavior of hormones has a profile that fits with what we have learned so far about the transmission of affect; and what we have learned is that such transmissions affect the subject's intentionality, insofar as the subject's agency is composed of its affects or passions" (76). Pheromones can jump between individuals, influencing behavior, Brennan writes, "Pheromones act as direction-givers which, as molecules, traverse the physical space between one subject and another, and factor in or determine the direction taken by the subject who inhales or absorbs them" (75). Biochemically speaking, we ingest one another.

We can create environments for the things we want to happen, but we cannot guarantee those things will happen. Our individual agency, in rhetoric or fermentation, has been greatly exaggerated. Brennan suggests that it is "faith in a fantasy" that "undermines the ability, both scientifically and practically, to detect directions that work against or for the agency we are meant to express: that which is distinctive in each of us" (76). Furthermore, "[b]ecause of this fantasy, our self-contained individual believes he acts of his own accord, and that his impulses and desires come from nowhere other than the history embodied in his genes. He is wrong. The self-contained individual driven by a genetic motor has antecedents of his own" (76-7). In other words, she writes, "we are not (necessarily) masters of the house" (77). And, it is not a closed system. Brennan writes, "In some cases both affect and

motion (hormones in these cases) are responding to a third factor altogether: the social environment, whose air can be thick with anxiety-provoking pheromones (or 'human chemosignals,' to use the preferred term)" (77). The social environment, then, is subject to stress, which does not reside in one individual, but can be transmitted throughout a situation, altering the behavior of hormones. As Brennan writes that "assumptions of successful evolution are manifestly at odds with the behavior of hormones in stress and related situations-their behavior shows that the organism does not always, or even habitually, act in its own best interests" (78). Our agency comes from all around us. That we do not always act in our own best interest and that our actions affect our hormones should come as no surprise. But the direction of these actions and the agents in charge are always in flux and are moved by stress and other invisible forces.

There are no hard distinctions between our biology, our moods, and our rhetorical styles. In "Gut Feminism," during a discussion of bulimia, Elizabeth A. Wilson writes, "The gut is sometimes angry, sometimes depressed, sometimes acutely self-destructive; under the stress of severe dieting, these inclinations come to dominate the gut's responsivity to the world" (84). We feel our moods in our guts, requiring an embodied non-rational rhetoric to account for the ways that our guts—and all the microbes therein—respond to those moods. Wilson writes that in moments of stress—even self-induced stress that comes from bulimia or another habitual behavior—"any radical distinction between stomach and mood, between vomiting and rage is artificial" (84). She writes, "there is no radical (originary) distinction between biology and mood. Mood is not added onto the gut, secondarily, disrupting its proper function; rather, temper, like digestion, is one of the events to which enteric substrata are naturally (originally) inclined" (85). Wilson thus blurs the lines between eating disorders,

nutritional disorders, and mood disorders, writing that "in addition to thinking of disruptions to eating as symptoms of depression, it may also be useful to think of depression as a kind of nutritional disorder" (85). Brennan concludes that "the transmission of affect," if it is to account for things like hormonal change during stress, "requires a new paradigm, one capable of handling intentional and affective connections between and among subjects and their environment" (77-8). I build on this, suggesting a micro(be)politics that accounts for these affective connections, but also argues for the role of the microbiome in making and enabling these connections and transmitting all sorts of other not-necessarily-unified signals.

We exist in the traces we leave and we transmit ourselves to others through these traces, but always incompletely. How we approach the ecosystem around us, the style in which we live, defines and redefines the social sphere, and this happens both through and despite human intention. As Bradford Vivian writes in "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," our rhetorical intentions are not the only thing that define our social relations:

> [T]he rhetoric of a given social and political style, by virtue of its discursive and aesthetic features rather than the intentions of a single speaker or author, organizes the formation of communities, stimulates relations between all manner of social agents, and publicly circulates conceptions of self, other, and community that define the social relations of a given epoch. (242)

Vivian is Building on the work of Michel Maffesoli, who defines style as "that which orients or writes the epoch" (4). Maffesoli writes, "there is nothing frivolous about style defined in this way. On the contrary, it is what may make all the microevents stand out, all the imperceptible mutations, the apparently anecdotal situations that back-to-back make up

culture." Microevents, writes Maffesoli, "serve as substrate, compost, for that creation which is a whole social life" (4). We cannot not copy. But we can alter the style in which we live and replicate. In fact, we already are. How we restyle our lives in a compostmodern rhetoric—where everything eats everything—is the question of micro(be)politics. In other words, all lifeforms leave traces. How we and they do this is—how we and they repeat ourselves—is how we change. This micro(be)politics is distinct from micropolitics in one significant way: as a third term inserted into the macropolitical and micropolitical equation, it disturbs the continuum and reopens a tiny space for social action, a tiny place to be.

Conclusion

Who Cares About Food and Rhetoric?

We have been exploring a rhetoric of food that is thoroughly Chipotlized, full of irreducible modularity, full of ingredients that have stories and histories that connect, endlessly, to other stories and histories. Chipotle builds and expands its transmittable networks, citing Michael Pollan to build its ethos. Pollan builds his network and establishes a genre whose conventions get repeated and reiterated. Pollan extends his network to Sandor Katz, who engages in both alternative food networks of fermentos and farmers markets and networks of the corporate, capitalist mainstream food chains like Whole Foods Market. We can read these networks macropolitically, micropolitically, or micro(be)politically. As we do, we find that there is no hard boundary between one network and the next. Chipotle and Whole Foods have political agency. Sandor Katz has a posse of not-so-underground individuals fermenting things at home as micropolitical statement. Further down, we find we are all microbes. Various repetitions build out these networks as they reach out in rhizomatic ways. The human is just one name for one kind of agglomeration in this network. Corporations, microbes, and disembodied parts of the network itself all exercise persuasion, sometimes with language, sometimes with chemosignals, but always through mimesis and repetition. Throughout this work, I have been concerned with rhetorics of food and the ways they are repeated through networks. To conclude, I would like to revisit another kind of mimesis, that of memes, as a way of answering the question "who cares?" Who cares about burritos? About Chipotle? About braceros? Who cares about Michael Pollan? About food dilemmas and food rules? Who cares about about Sandor Katz? About fermentos? About

microbes? Who cares about ecologies and networks? I have been attempting to answer these questions all along. Chipotle cares about Pollan and Pollan cares about Katz. Braceros cared about burritos and fermentos care for microbes. And yet, there is still this nagging perception that food should somehow be disconnected from the more important things toward which we might direct our attention. To wit: a common meme.

Memeplay as Affirmation

There is a meme on the Internet that goes something like this: No one cares what you ate for lunch. Or breakfast. Or dinner. There are many variants. Sometimes it appears in the form of a question like "Who cares what you ate for lunch?" or sometimes, as memes are wont to do, it merges with another popular visual meme, like the Matrix Morpheus meme (A$AP Twisty, see fig. 4.1), or the Spongebob Squarepants Imagine meme (*JUST HAD LUNCH, Took food photos;* see fig. 4.2 and fig. 4.3), or the popular Someecards iconographic memes (Samiiejohnson, see fig. 4.4).

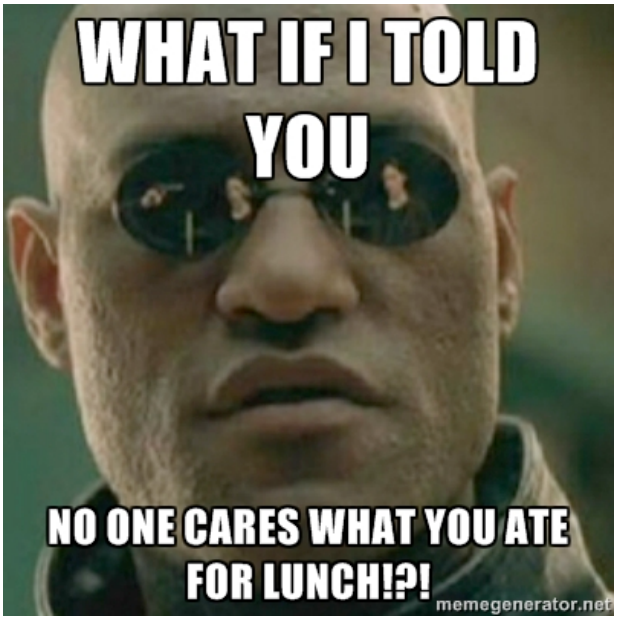

Fig. 4.1. Matrix Morpheus meme merged with the lunch meme. http://memegenerator.net/instance/28514079, n.d.; Web; 6 April 2015.

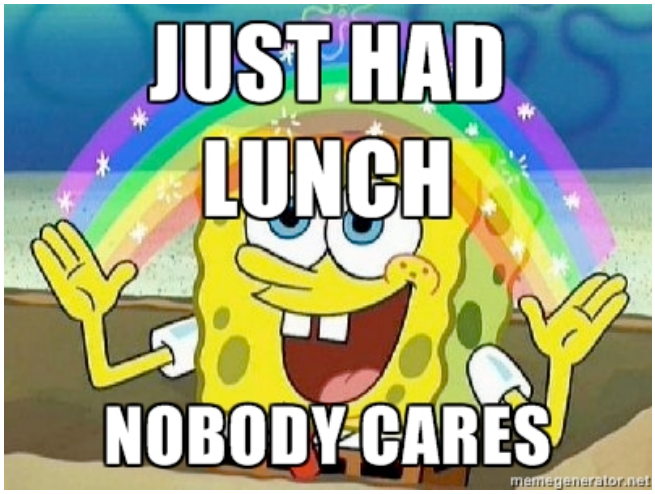

Fig. 4.2. Spongebob imagine meme merged with the nobody cares what you eat meme. http://memegenerator.net/instance/25105327, n.d.; Web; 6 April 2015.

Fig. 4.3. Spongebob imagine meme merged with the nobody cares what you eat meme and food photo meme. http://memegenerator.net/instance/30879430, n.d.; Web; 6 April 2015.

There is a book titled *No One Cares What You Had for Lunch* about ideas for keeping your blog free of mundane and repetitive posts about your meals (Mason). Sometimes the meme is applied to specific social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. Posts from so-called social networking experts earnestly repeat this meme so often that they have become a commonplace. In fact, in a sort of metonymic turn, the meme has become shorthand for disparaging entire social networks like Twitter or Facebook, as in "Why would I want to join Twitter? I don't care what you had for lunch." And yet, alongside this "nobody cares" meme is an incredibly robust digital ecosystem revolving around food. Food bloggers, memoirists, podcasters, and vloggers are everywhere. And they are often amateurs. For example, the Austin Food Blogger Alliance has about 150 active members. Across the country, hundreds of food bloggers responded to a Foodista.com "The State of Food Blogging" survey and,

Fig. 4.4. Someecards Facebook rules meme combined with the nobody cares what you eat meme. http://www.someecards.com/usercards/viewcard/MjAxMi0yYzU2MGZmOTllYWNmZGE5, n.d.; Web; 6 April 2015.

according to the survey, 79% of respondents were unconnected to any business or organization. Partners Mira Fine and Daniel Klein garner hundreds of thousands of plays on YouTube and Vimeo (as well as two James Beard Foundation Awards) after just a few years of documenting sustainable eating across Minnesota, the United States, and then the world ("About The Perennial Plate"). Thousands of food-related podcasts, with small audiences are available through iTunes. Online cooking classes are available through ChefHangout.com (built on Google + Hangouts), Epicurious Online Cooking School (Sponsored by the Culinary Institute of America), Smart Kitchen Online Cooking School, and many others. From the 9.9 million monthly unique web users attracted to online branches of Food Network ("About Food Network") to the relative handful of downloads of a local food-related podcast or web video, it is clear that there is a vast, diverse ecosystem of online food media and food media consumers. Obviously *some* people care.

As I have been demonstrating, the rhetorical significance of our individual food choices can be seen all over the Internet. The idea that nobody online cares what you eat is

clearly more than a straightforward statement of opinion. To understand how such a statement operates, it is helpful to examine memes and how they work. The figures above are, at present, the most recognizable byproducts of memes, but memes are more than a square image with an iconic figure and block type distributed on memedump sites. As Potolsky's discussion of the "memeplex" in *Mimesis* (which I referenced in "Burrito Rhetorics,") suggests, theories of rhetorical repetition and imitation move through culture as a complex, variable entity (160). Potolsky gives a history of memes and the memeplex. Building on the work of Richard Dawkins, Scott Atran, Daniel C. Dennett, Potolsky explains the evolution of the concept of the meme. Taking a cue from Potolsky and using these three thinkers, I will quickly explain how I understand memes in order to continue the conversation in the context of a rhetoric of food. Richard Dawkins calls memes "units of cultural inheritance." At a talk at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Dawkins compares memes to genes, saying that memes are the cultural analog to biological genes. "We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines," Dawkins says ("The Selfish Gene: Thirty Years On"). In "The Trouble With Memes," Scott Atran writes:

> Candidate memes include a word, a sentence, a thought, a belief, a melody, a scientific theory, an equation, a philosophical puzzle, a religious ritual, a political ideology, an agricultural practice, a fashion, a dance, a poem, a recipe for a meal, table manners, court etiquette, or plans for cars, computers, and cellphones. Derived from the Greek root *mimeme*, with allusions to memory and mime (and the French word *même*, or 'same'), a meme is supposed to replicate from mind to mind in ways analogous to the ways a gene replicates from body to body. (Atran 351-2)

The analogy between genes and memes is not perfect; Altran, for one, suggests that eventually the analogy will be a mere "pedagogic device," rather than something that "holds up under testable scrutiny" (353). But Dawkins writes that biological genes and mind-based memes are two examples of "a more general process" of replication: "The real unit of natural selection was any kind of replicator, any unit of which copies are made, with occasional errors, and with some influence or power over their own probability of replication" (qtd. in Blackmore). Generally speaking, the comparison is apt and helps us consider the stakeholders in processes of replication.

Crucial to the discussion of stakeholders in the processes of replication is the question of who benefits. Dennett poses "*Cui bono*?" as a "key evolutionary question" in Darwin's *Dangerous Idea: Evolutino and the Meanings of Life*. When it comes to memes, Atran responds to Dennett's "*cui bono?*" thusly: "The answer: not brains, individuals, or societies but memes themselves. Just as genes or viruses seek serial immortality by successively using, then discarding the individual organisms that host them, so memes seek to perpetuate themselves by nesting and nurturing in mind after mind" (353). I am ambivalent about whether individuals or societies definitively *do not* benefit from memes. I argue that, like bacteria, there might be beneficial and detrimental memes. And, like bacteria, they travel together. Memes are like the co-located commercial spaces of Yum! Brands where a TacoBell, Pizza Hut, and KFC might occupy the same place. This concept could be writ larger. In some situations, the same company might open a KenTacoHut in one building, but in other more complex cases, a Chick-fil-A might often co-locate with a Starbucks and a Walmart, creating a bog-box commercial portal that looks the same in every city. It is the same with memes. There are individual memes, like the "nobody cares meme" or the

"Spongebob Squarepants Imagine Meme." But more often, these memes travel together in combinations. Dawkins writes, "Memes, like genes, are selected against the background of other memes in the meme pool. The result is that gangs of mutually compatible memes—coadapted meme complexes or memeplexes—are found cohabiting in individual brains" ("Foreword"). The "coadapted meme complex," or memeplex happens when "a meme associates itself with other memes in a package[...] Together, memes in a memeplex act to restructure the mind's computational architecture" (Atran 353). The memeplex does not only restructure the mind of an individual, but also restructures the rhetorical situation in a way that places individuals not at the center, but in a network with other agents, some of which may have no consciousness at all. The meme is a sort of disembodied idea that lodges itself in a consciousness, but has no consciousness of its own. The rhetorical significance of memes is rooted in mimesis, the representation of real life in virtual worlds. Mimesis has never come to us a straightforward doctrine. Rather it comes to us as a complex web of interconnected ideas involving repetition and imitation.

To understand why a memplex like "Nobody cares what you ate for lunch" exists alongside a lot of interest in what people are eating, we can break apart the memeplex and examine the parts. In its memeified form, the phrase "nobody cares" operates similarly to the earlier phrase "whatever." In "The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy as Composition" Jeff Rice examines the word "whatever" as it circulates in popular culture and in pedagogy. He writes, "Whatever is best understood as a popular, everyday term used heavily by youth culture when an experience or reaction can't be named" (455). "Whatever" communicates more of an affect than a verbalized message. As Rice puts it, "The response, 'whatever,' evokes not so much a lack of response but either a sense that something has

eluded the meaning of the response or of defiance, dismissal, and opposition" (455). The "nobody cares" meme operates in much the same way. As the wealth of care that goes into crafting online food messages suggests, it is not a literal assessment of the status of online food rhetoric. In fact, "nobody cares what you had for lunch" is not even a realistic assessment of audience preferences within specific networks like Facebook or Twitter. (I belong to a group of food bloggers who are very active on Facebook and Twitter. Much of what they post is about what they are eating.) In fact, I argue that memeplay acts, just like trolling does, as a content generator for these networks. "Nobody cares" is a response to the deluge of posts that elicit the response and demonstrate the opposite, that many people care. Enough people had to care enough about what they were eating to stop long enough to snap a picture or write a status update. And those posts had to reach a critical mass until people started saying "enough!" Posts about what people eat have become generic in the most basic sense: they have coalesced into a recognizable genre to which people could respond. But like "whatever," "nobody cares" communicates as much about the meme deployer as it does about a deluge of food photos. "Nobody cares" suggests semantic satiation for the user, not for the network.

Networks benefit from the "nobody cares" memes because they act as both *provocation* and *response* to the great number of people who do care about what people are eating and drinking. The "nobody cares" memes both reflect a critical mass of food media to respond to and enact a response that galvanizes those interested in online discussions of food. People who care form subnetworks that approach the documentation of food in different ways. Subnetworks form as Facebook groups or as swarms of followers on Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter. Bloggers band together and subnetworks spill over into

RL, forming groups such as the Austin Food Blogger Alliance. As these networks form, they intersect with other networks, finding new ways of cooking, eating, documenting, and learning about food. The work I have done here is an attempt to build out and build on those networks in rhetoric and composition. More specifically, I'm working at/on an emerging subnetwork at the intersection of rhetoric and foodways. In "Rhetorics and Foodways," an introduction to a forum connecting the two in *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies*, Anna M. Young, Justin Eckstein, and Donovan Conley write "Three key terms capture the richness of overlap between rhetorics and foodways: Production, Circulation, and Access" (2). This work has certainly engaged with the ideas around those terms, as do the articles in the forum. They also point to major opportunities at this intersection. I have been exploring the ways food rhetorics travel through networks online. What Young et. al call "circulation" and the way that circulation interacts with "production" and "access." Think, for example, of the way that burritos moved up through California along the mission trails and were served to braceros who were only given access to poor imitations of the food of their homelands. Ideas about foods are also produced, circulate, and are accessible to some and inaccessible to others. The genre conventions that presently circulate in food rhetorics were largely produced by Michael Pollan, whose approach to food is accessible to some and inaccessible to others. Microbes, and the subcultures that travel with them, also circulate, produce certain effects, and are regulated and cultivated in various ways that encourage or prevent access.

Avenues for Further Research

As I outlined in my introduction, there are rhetorics of food in textbooks, in edited collections, in special issues in rhetoric and composition journals, and in journals at the ecotone between rhetoric and composition and other disciplines and in food studies generally. All of these publications help to establish the context for more work on food rhetorics in monographs, books, large-scale digital projects, and stand-alone articles in major rhetoric and composition journals. In particular, three avenues for future rhetorical work seem promising: food and travel, feeding and care, and non-Platonic philosophies of food.

In some cases, literally looking at how rhetoric travels with food along avenues, routes, trails and supply chains and other physical networks might help us better understand certain aspects rhetorical delivery. We might continue to delve into the ways that digital networks extend to and jack into pre-existing, developing, and imagined extra-digital realms. Travel of all sorts—shipping, tourism, exploration, humanitarian work, missionary work, military deployment, immigration, and emigration—moves food and food rhetorics from place to place. This movement comes with all kinds of social and cultural contact. Foodways has a head start down some of these avenues. But those of us in rhetoric and composition interested in food are well positioned to explore the ways that food and persuasion interact in, and travel together through, what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones" or "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34). How do we document food rhetorics in those contact zones in ways that do not reinforce asymmetrical relations of power? If we take pictures of our food as we tour this region or that, are we representing the food of "exotic" "others," are we just being obnoxious tourists, or are we encoding valuable

information into memory? How we negotiate each encounter will serve as partial answers to questions like these. These questions demonstrate the risks to working in/on/around/through contact zones. The answers will never be complete and they are not mutually exclusive. We can simultaneously document valuable experiences, exoticize others, and behave as obnoxious tourists. Questions like these will never stop coming at us, and we can never answer them satisfactorily. But we can be aware that our behavior is always questionable in contact zones. With this awareness, we can try to live and work, even if only briefly, in contact zones in ways that demonstrate the complexity that hospitality always entails. Attuning ourselves to the ways food moves with us through these zones might alter our ideas about what constitutes rhetorical delivery. When there is a language barrier—or another cultural gap—messages are still delivered with food. If rhetorical delivery used to be about not just *what* is said, but *how* it is said, now it is also about what is served by whom to whom.

Another avenue for more research is to continue to reiterate the question "Who cares?" and seek new answers. We might not only answer this in response to the "nobody cares what you eat" memes, but also to explore who, specifically, does the caring as it relates to food. Whether feeding animals, a family, or the self, how do those who care encounter, counter, and enact rhetorics of feeding? There is already a good start here. To name a few: Jay Mechling explores the rhetorical aspects of a "masculinity of care" around feeding in the Boy Scouts of America; Amy Koerber examines at the way the rhetoric of breastfeeding intersects with health care and child care ("Rhetorical Agency"); Annemarie Mol looks at the rhetorics of "enjoying your food" versus the rhetorics of "minding your plate" in health care and self care ("Mind Your Plate"). For example, how might we continue to problematize the

expectations of the family dinner so that it does not recapitulate unrealistic, unattainable, or undesirable standards for those charged with caring?

Finally, what might a capital "E" Epicurean rhetoric allow us to do that rhetorics derived from Platonic philosophy do not? Might such a rhetoric help, just as sophistic rhetoric has helped, find more productive paths away from the Platonic idea that there are things to be taken seriously, and cookery and rhetoric are not among them? O'Keefe suggests that Epicurus understood that "lack of bodily pain and freedom from mental turmoil are not neutral states, but themselves pleasurable: indeed, the highest sorts of pleasures. So Epicurean hedonism turns out to be the pursuit of tranquillity." Are there food discourses that circulate in our networks demonstrate a tranquility that is "attained primarily by shedding the vain and empty desires that lead to anxiety"? (O'Keefe). How is this tranquility structured in the spaces through which people move every day? Who has access to tranquility? How might a rhetoric of food based on an Epicurean understanding of pleasure be organized and reorganized?

These are just a few of the productive paths down which we might travel. As I have shown here, we have already begun. There are emerging rhetorics of food and corresponding methodologies that have begun to chart these paths. Cultural biographies of things, rhetorical analysis, genre studies, gender studies, and posthuman theory have all been instrumental to this work. But we might continue to find new sites of meaning and new memeplexes where eating and repeating occur, and we also might find and invent new methodologies to study them. As we do, new networks will form and open up new possibilities for what we can now call food rhetorics.

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